

# THE MEDIATIZATION OF LIFE – AN ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE THE PHENOMENON

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## ABSTRACT

The mediatization of the human life space is a consequence of both: the progress of media technologies and mass scale and pluralism of the media. This analysis is an attempt to show some aspects of mediatization processes of life, which I understand as a multi-faceted phenomenon in social communication using technical tools of symbolic forms of communication. These analyzes are probing scientific poll of this phenomenon based on both: empirical knowledge about the processes of technological change in the media, as well as based on the media theory and on the philosophical concepts of contemporary media space.

**Key words:** mediatization of the life, the mass media, new media, media axiology, communication, the space of media, interpersonal communication, human and media

## *1. Introduction*

Mediatization of human life space is a consequence of both the progress of media technologies and mass scale and pluralism of modern media. these features appear on all levels of media communication: the level of the senders' mass scale, the mass scale character of the broadcast contents, the level of quality and variety of media or the level of mass recipients. The aim of present analyses is to show

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some aspects of life mediatization processes which I understand as a multi-aspect phenomenon of using of technical tools in the transmission of symbolic forms in social communicating. Such an operative understanding of mediatization allows for an analytical sounding of the causes, consequences and contexts of this phenomenon, constituting the indication of media society development and shaping of informative civilization. In my analyses I base upon both results of empirical research and I apply the method of sounding of general culture phenomena in the modern media civilization. One of the processes of modern media culture is the process of media convergence. The phenomenon of life mediatization has its vital foundation not only in new media but it also originates many consequences of a very different character, also the philosophical one. It becomes the object of analyses of many scientific disciplines, interdisciplinary research, as well as an important element of media theories or quasi-theories. The present article is an attempt of discovering some aspects and contexts of the phenomenon of life mediatization. It has a character probing the dimensions of this phenomenon on the basis of both empirical knowledge of the processes of technological changes in the world of media, and on the basis of the theoretical-philosophical conceptions of the modern media-sphere.<sup>1</sup>

## *2. Mediatization as a multiple transformation of the conditions of life*

The turn of the century is a time of an enormous telematic and mediamatic revolution in the domain of mass media development.<sup>2</sup> Especially the development of new informative and communicative technologies has entailed a radical change in the field of mass communicating which, in turn, has, to a great extent, shaped a new quality of social life, generally defined as an informative society. The dynamism of technological changes has influenced and still does, the new quality of media and the effectiveness of their influence. Influenced by new informative and communicative technologies, modern society undergoes transformation processes. The technological changes of the turn of the century have caused mass media to become “more and more persuasive and effective”,<sup>3</sup> and the measur-

<sup>1</sup> See M. Drożdż: Logos i ethos mediów. Dyskurs paradygmatyczny filozofii mediów, Tarnów 2005, pp. 31-106.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. M. Latzer: Mediamatik – Die Konvergenz von Telekommunikation, Computer und Rundfunk, Opladen 1997; M. Latzer (ed.): Mediamatikpolitik für die Digitale Ökonomie. eCommerce, Qualifikation und Marktmacht in der Informationsgesellschaft, Innsbruck–Wien 2000; M. Latzer, S.W. Schmitz: Grundzüge der Digitalen Ökonomie des Mediamatik-Sektors, IWE (Forschungsstelle für institutionellen Wandel und europäische Integration) – Working Paper 16, Wien 2001, see too [online:] <http://www.iwe.oeaw.ac.at/workpap.htm> [access: 14.03.2014]; M. Latzer, S.W. Schmitz: Die Ökonomie des eCommerce. New Economy, Digitale Ökonomie und realwirtschaftliche Auswirkungen, Marburg 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Papiéska Rada ds. Środków Społecznego Przekazu, Etyka w środkach przekazu, Watykan 2000, no. 2, [online:] [http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WR/rady\\_pontyfikalne/r\\_komunik\\_spol/etyka\\_srspl\\_04062000.html](http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WR/rady_pontyfikalne/r_komunik_spol/etyka_srspl_04062000.html) [access: 14.03.2014].

ability of the results of their influence, which is “the coming of a society of information, is a real cultural revolution”.<sup>4</sup> Media become a creator and generator of the processes of mediatization of society, leading to a new reality, which is the media space. Mediatization in the strict sense is not a homogeneous process, it is rather a platform expressing many isolated processes of media transformations. To begin we can mention only some of them: transformation of forms of interpersonal and media communication (divergence, convergence and intermediality), the development of new transmission channels (digitalization), transformation of structures of media institutions (cartellization), change of media forms and genres, changes of media functions and malfunctions, changes of evaluating of media transmissions (commercialization), space and time compression of communication and information possibilities (time and space translocation), change of mass scale character, unification of the forms and contents of transmission (globalization), change within the space of the recipients of transmissions, transformations in lifestyle of individuals and societies (media consumerism), transformations of criteria and systems of evaluating, mediatization of social relations, transformation and modernization of the public sphere etc. These changes touch almost every sphere of a man’s life, the private and public one, cultural, religious, educational, economic and political. Man’s active presence in the social structures as well as societies’ functioning, require more and more a media infrastructure, computer infrastructure which as a result, make man addicted to media. Many authors show that media, by determining to a great extent, the experience of the world by man and his functioning in these conditions, intensify negative tendencies in media influence space. They generate more and more unintentional media malfunctions which provoke diverse effects in many dimensions of human life. The effects of media malfunctions often have a very destructive character: they destroy the identity and objectivity of man, relativize values, virtualize the reality etc.

Thus Media, widely understood, are not a neutral tool of communication and passing of information, they are not just a neutral channel or transmission belt of the contents reflecting the reality, but they are a creator of new qualities in man’s life, of a new vision of the world and conception of man. Looking through popular literature dealing with this object, we discover an unusually suggestive vision of the virtual reality, the world of images, a computer simulation unrelated to the time and space and society – a collection of units, experiencing individually the mass-produced and delivered stimuli. Sometimes, one cannot resist the thought that this world is surely not the McLuhan “global village”, and the society living in it cannot be defined as a community. Thus In the media space in which man lives at the turn of centuries, we observe contradictory visions and tendencies: on the one hand, a tendency of fragmentarization and homogenization, a vision of a modern and mass man, a tendency of a clashing of uniqueness and objectiv-

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<sup>4</sup> Papieska Rada Kultury, O duszpasterskie podejście do kultury, no. 9, in: Papieska Rada ds. Środków Społecznego Przekazu, Etyka w środkach przekazu, op. cit.

ism, on the other hand – globalization trends, a desire of creating global rules and standardization.<sup>5</sup> What we can surely state is the fact of a real transformation of the world in which man lives, and of the transformation of man's life in this world, being an after-effect of “the technological-communication revolution”. This new media reality has to become, therefore, both the object of a public discourse on the power of media and their role in the life of an individual person and societies and the object of research and analyses of many scientific disciplines, and first and foremost, the sciences of the medias.

### *3. Relational dynamism of the media sphere*

From the methodological perspective, it is worth noticing the interesting trend in the analysis of media communication. In almost every area of research and analyses, we deal with the problems of communication, information or the concept of a medium, which constitute not only the object of a theoretical speculation, but also the basis for constructing functional models of communication in this area. Krallmann retains that everybody becomes, in practice, an expert for communication and media.<sup>6</sup> The apparent ease of reflexions about media results also from the basic features of the media communication, characterizing the modern media sphere. They are, amongst others: regularity, universality, changeability, relative dynamism (relativity), necessity.<sup>7</sup>

The feature of regularity of media results from their mass character. Media and media communication are, as a phenomenon of everyday life, an element of everyday, colloquial experience of almost each man. Availability, ease or humdrum of the media experiences of this kind, caused that, from a scientific perspective, the media communication did not constitute, for a longer time, the object of serious, theoretical analyses. Since it was thought that reality which seemingly trouble-free functioned based upon colloquial knowledge or technical knowledge, was not worth theoretical analyses. The modern theories of media show something totally opposite. The common availability, regularity and simplicity of media implies more theoretical problems than it apparently seemed.

The universality of media combines also with their mass scale or mass popularity. It expresses both the fact of common, universal presence of media in the space of human action and the fact of universal mediality of human action. Yet another dimension of universality is universalism of media in practical application and effects of their influence. Universality and universalism of media has made them become the object of interest of many sciences so that, in the initial stage of

<sup>5</sup> Cf. R. Szwed: *Spółczesność wirtualna. Społeczność informacyjna*, Lublin 2003, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> D. Krallmann, A. Ziemann: *Grundkurs Kommunikationswissenschaft. Mit einem Hypertext-Vertiefungsprogramm im Internet*, München 2001, p. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. K. Merten: *Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaft. Band 1/1: Grundlagen der Kommunikationswissenschaft*, Münster 1999, pp. 15f.

the theoretical media research, the methodological boundaries of competence and scope of analyses of specific disciplines became blurred.

Some modern theories of media, especially those from post-structuralism or post-modernism, are an example of this methodological chaos.

Another feature of media is their changeability or “transitoriness and elusiveness”, constituting a serious obstacle in the scientific research. Sciences of communication use more willingly model structures of communication processes than their actual and real functioning. It results from the same nature of the functioning of media and media communication processes which are easier to describe as models on the basis of theoretically supposed and accepted patterns.

The richness and variety of media theories results more from the differences of theoretical paradigms of these theories than from the variety of actual processes of media communication.

The relational character of media results from the nature and dynamism of communication processes. Media place themselves “between” different elements of communication processes as elements mediating and generating the effectiveness of the communication itself. Media communication can be caught more as a relational reality than as an objective reality. “Relationality” of media uncovers also the dynamism of media on all levels of their influence. In every type of communication there is a different kind of relation combining the sender and recipient. The kind and type of these relations constitutes a criterion of typology of mass communication for many researchers.<sup>8</sup>

The irrevocability or necessity of media is understood as a property resulting from the structure of the communication processes. Merten retains that the very fact of the communication processes coming into being, excludes at the same time their negation.<sup>9</sup> Communication does not allow exceptions for “the will of not-communicating must also be communicated”. The necessity of media results therefore, from a general notion of medium as a universal means of transmission present in every process of knowledge and communication. In the space of media communication the necessity of media is not only related to the fact of irrevocability of any medium in the processes of communication, but also in the pragmatic dimensions, with the role and meaning of media in the functioning of the modern informative society.

#### 4. *Mediated space of man's life*

Man is present and participates on different levels of his activity in the space created by media: it is a space of symbolic forms and their receptive semantics

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<sup>8</sup> See B. Dobek-Ostrowska (ed.): *Współczesne systemy komunikowania*, Wrocław 1998, pp. 15-20; M. Filipiak: *Homo communicans. Wprowadzenie do teorii masowego komunikowania*, Lublin 2003, pp. 26f.

<sup>9</sup> A. Merten: *Einführung in die Kommunikationswissenschaft*. Band 1/1, op. cit., p. 17.

and sense. This space generated by media, is experienced by a human being as an area, where his relations with the reality undergo mediatization, which means they base upon media as tools of communication. This mediatization can be understood either as a process in technical or mechanical categories, comprising the entirety of influence of media as mechanisms of transmission and mediating in communication. Or in semiotic-axiological categories as a process of evaluating of the contents of media transmissions, leading to the rise of new qualities and significative senses. In this first perspective the mediatization is a form or a process of mediation, for which the main means and tool are the media, whereas from the other perspective, mediatization is a process shaping a new quality of the informative society. Thanks to the multi-dimensionality of this process, within the mediatization of space by media, a new quality of human life space forms and is constituted. Media become a creator of new virtues, a place of transformation and infiltration of various orders: technical, cultural and mental.<sup>10</sup>

During my analyses two concepts appear: media space and mediatized space. Some authors are willing to use these notions interchangeably<sup>11</sup>, whereas others try to differentiate the media space from the mediatized space, retaining that these two realities cannot be identified.<sup>12</sup> Wojciech Chyła tries to verify the concept of space, which is generated by media as means, mediation tools, basing on a purely technological aspect of their mediation as a function of mechanical mediation. He believes the “technologization of mediation and technologization of public space gives, all in all, a media public space: mediatized: technologically mediated public space.”<sup>13</sup>

As a result he identifies these two realities. Whereas, Barbara Kita, confirming the terminological division by Régis Debray<sup>14</sup>, believes that media space is a physical area of media functioning, whereas mediatized space is a new quality product of the interaction of media and man and society. She does not agree for posing the equals sign between the mediatized space and media space, which – in her opinion – would result in their standardization. “Mediatization broadly understood, which results from a specific uptake of medium (not only as a mediating means – as it is commonly understood), is sometimes close to the category of interface, whereas another time it makes up the structure of netting”.<sup>15</sup> She under-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. B. K i t a : *Między przestrzeniami. O kulturze nowych mediów*, Kraków 2003, p. 43.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. W. C h y ł a : *Szkice o kulturze audiowizualnej*, Poznań 1998.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. B. K i t a : *Między przestrzeniami...*, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>13</sup> W. C h y ł a : *Technologicznie zapośredniczona (medialna) przestrzeń publiczna: ponowoczesna maszyna rządzenia bez ludzi*, [in:] J. S. W o j c i e c h o w s k i, A. Z e i d l e r - J a n i s z e w s k a (eds.): *Formy estetyzacji przestrzeni publicznej*, Warszawa 1998 (cit. after: B. Kita: *Między przestrzeniami...*, op. cit., p. 43).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. R. D e b r a y : *Für eine Mediologie*, [in:] C. P i a s, J. V o g l, L. E n g e l l, O. F a h l e, B. N e i t z e l (eds.): *Kursbuch Medienkultur. Die maßgeblichen Theorien von Brecht bis Baudrillard*, Stuttgart 2000, pp. 67-76; R. D e b r a y : *Manifeste médiologiques*, Paris 1994; R. Debray: *Einführung in die Mediologie*, Bern 2003; F. H a r t m a n n : *Mediologie. Ansätze einer Medientheorie der Kulturwissenschaften*, Wien 2003.

<sup>15</sup> B. K i t a : *Między przestrzeniami...*, op. cit., p. 43.

stands the mediatized space as “an originally physical, classical space of reality, transformed (...) according to the activity of new audiovisual media. (...) with their characteristics and also with the ability to transform this space”.<sup>16</sup> Such a space is characterized – as Barbara Kita writes – “quasi-directness” and “quasi-objectivity”, making the impression of a relation, “seemingly non-mediated” contact.<sup>17</sup> At this time it should be noticed that the processes of mediatization co-creating such a space, are related but not identical with the processes of mediation. Debray attempts to describe the modern space of man’s life through the prism of mediation of two spheres: technology and culture<sup>18</sup>, which takes place in a characteristic habitat *milieu*. An effect of this mediation would be a media sphere which, in this destructive media context, becomes a space of relativized values, a fuzzy ambiguous sense and deconstructed social relations. My understanding of media sphere has little to do with the vision coming from the analysis by R. Debray which is an example of post-structuralist visions of a media society.

### *5. Irremovability of interpersonal in the mediatized world*

If we disregard detailed analyses of similarities and differences between media space and mediatized space, if we disregard terminological arguments which are – in my opinion – just a consequence of differences of formal perspectives of analyses, we take mediatization as a process shaping the media space, understood not only as an area within which the media function, but also as an axiological space of indirect interpersonal communicating. This thought is corresponded with the fundamental assumption of my analyses, the thesis of “the irremovability of personality”, which is the necessity of taking into account a human being in the media communicating, in all the stages of its realization or coming true. During my further analyses I will try to prove the necessity and veracity of this thesis, based on which one can construct the foundations of media axiology.

It is worth, at the opportunity of these reflexions on the essence of mediatization, showing initially the possibility of interpersonal in the media communicating. From the point of view of most modern theories, all sorts of communicating are rooted in the conception of common space.<sup>19</sup> If the space of communicating makes a physical contact possible – then we have to do with an indirect interpersonal communication. However, if the communicating space has a virtual character, then communicating takes the form of a mediated, mediatized process, which is a personal communicating process aided by transmission means.

<sup>16</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 40; R. W i l l i a m s : Efekty technologii i jej wykorzystanie, [in:] A. Gwóźdź (ed.): Pejzaże audiowizualne. Telewizja – wideo – komputer, Kraków 1997, p. 58.

<sup>18</sup> R. D e b r a y : Manifeste médiologiques, op. cit.; B. Kita: Między przestrzeniami..., op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> J.B. T h o m p s o n : Media i nowoczesność. Społeczna teoria mediów, Wrocław 2001, pp. 31-52.

It would be useful as well, in the context of this analysis of a personalistic dimension of media communication, to pay attention to one regularity more. Through ages very different meanings have been ascribed to the term of “communication” – in a general sense. As the civilization and technical progress advanced in the field of communication and information these meanings overlapped, and they did not negate and exclude the previous meanings. Thus the concept of “communication”, regardless of semantic perspective and pragmatic area of applications, will always have, perhaps to a greater and greater extent, personalist connotations. From the perspective of today’s understanding of media communication and historic development of communicating processes one can observe at least four semantic layers in the concept of communicating. Firstly, communication in the sense of communion and participation, making common. Such an understanding dominated in oral societies, communication was a factor of agreement and keeping up the unity of the group was its elementary function. However, in the culture of writing a fragmentarization of social structures and individualization of communicating processes took place. In this individualized mentality and in the “segment” social structure, communication meant a division and exchange. This sense prevailed in the culture of writing and print – thanks to manuscripts and pointed writing communication crossed the limitations of time and space. Whereas, in the age of mass culture communication gains a third sense – a sense of diffusion and media transmission responding to anonymous and unidentified expectations. In the era of electronic media, new media, a completely new meaning comes to the former meanings of the term “communication”: “all the dynamic relation which takes place in action”. Communication here ceases to be an approach of subjects and starts to perform the function of a link between “machinized concepts”. In this situation a man speaking becomes a transmitter and a man listening – a receiver, whereas the content draws reality only from its own structure. These two aspects are significant elements of the change which takes place. Thus, a fourth general sense of communication comes to the meaning of communion, diffusion – the sense of mutual connection or commutation. In this budding culture it is no longer essential, if two subjects meet thanks to communication. It is no longer essential to find something common nor express oneself. The essence is commutation which is connecting to sources of information.<sup>20</sup> Media communication, in this last meaning, depersonalizes the most, but if we rightly assume that communication consists, in the first place, in semantic relations, so also communication by means of new media does not write off and can never negate man as the subject and foundation of semantic coding and decoding of media transmissions.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. J. Lohisse: *Przyszłość kultury z informatyzowanej*, [in:] G. Godlewski, A. Mencwel, R. Sulima (eds.): *Antropologia słowa. Zagadnienia i wybór tekstów*, Warszawa 2003, p. 659.



New informative-communicative technologies and interactive media force us to broaden the concept of media communicating. In order to show the possibility of interpersonality, in this broadened notion of media communicating, I will use the differentiation by Kluszczyński. He distinguishes two sorts of mediated communicating: quasi-indirect and direct communicating. By the quasi-indirect communicating which more and more often realizes in the media, he understands “every case of mediated communicating, in which we deal with a real interaction, but related to a mediated contact between individuals taking part in it. In the quasi-indirect communicating common space is broadened to such dimensions which make an indirect contact impossible. Mediating the contact does not interfere, however, with starting a dialog (interpersonal interaction). (...) Unlike the previous one, direct communicating is every case of mediatized communicating, in which neither indirect contact nor a real dialog (a real interpersonal interaction) takes place”<sup>21</sup>

This analysis shows that a personal interaction is possible in the media communication space, both in quasi-indirect and direct communicating.

Another argumentation, supporting the interpersonality of media communicating, is based on the existence of common space of communicating where the participants of the communication processes belong. For this purpose, I will use the typology by Franklin Fearing. Already in the 50s of the XX century Fearing formulated the basic attributes of interpersonal communicating, which also allow to capture the moment of interpersonality in a mediated communicating, which is media, where the communicating space has a virtual character. Communicating allows to be characterized – according to Fearing – as an interpersonal communicating, if one can describe it through reference to four properties:

- there exists a directness of communicative relations;
- communication is a symbolic-sign process;
- signs and symbols are a carrier of sense and meanings and as such, they create the possibility of exchanging information;
- there exists a possibility of decodification of signs and symbols in a mutual interpretation of transmission.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the fact that in the typological features by Fearing we do not find any references to media, we can easily show that within his theory interpersonal communicating does not require real or mediated interpersonal contacts at all. We only must assume that the content of communicating as a human product, exists in the space of its producer, regardless of that it is a physical or virtual space. As a result, it means that also media which do not create the possibility of interpersonal and

<sup>21</sup> Cf. R.W. Kluszczyński: *Spółczeństwo informacyjne. Cyberkultura. Sztuka multimedialna*, Kraków 2002, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. F. Fearing: *Human Communication*, [in:] L.A. Dexter, D.M. White (eds.): *People, Society, and Mass Communication*, New York 1953, p. 42f. Cf. too: B. Dobek-Ostrowska (ed.): *Współczesne systemy komunikowania*, op. cit., pp. 11f; R.W. Kluszczyński: *Spółczeństwo informacyjne...*, op. cit., pp. 19f.

physical contact of participants of communicating, fulfill Fearing's requirements and can be recognized as means of personal communicating. Since media are in the common space together with creators, senders and recipients, making a media symbolic discourse possible to all participants the communicating process.<sup>23</sup>

The rise and functioning of new electronic media has radically changed the horizon of tasks and purposes of media, broadening elementarily their role and place in man's and society's life. One should, therefore, look at the modern media sphere from the perspective of different typologies of functions and malfunctions of media. The changing media reality has made many typologies up to now, of media functioning, expire.

### 6. *Artefacts and paradoxes of mediatization*

New media, taken as a whole, with their functioning and influence on the global scale, appear as culture and social phenomena possessing features of new culture artefacts. They create a new kind of media artefacts. Media artefacts, being a characteristic kind of culture artefacts of an informative society, combine within themselves, the features of physical artefacts (media treated as a material product of culture of information and communication), behavioral artefacts (media create new ways of behaviors, reactions etc.) and language artefacts (the language of media as a new way of social communication). Media artefacts fully express the content of the definition of artefact as a intentionally produced or processed object, to which man gave a form culturally defined and established and destiny. Although all media are, to some extent, deliberate social products, many analyses, regarding modern media, refer unconsciously or clearly, to artefactual or idealized theories of interpersonal communication.<sup>24</sup> In the field of media, very clearly, the richness of social and culture conventions, expectations, actions or limitations reveals itself. Media, perhaps more than all other culture areas, are subject to technological, historic, economic, political and cultural influences. All these limitations, causations and influences create a new kind of media artefacts.<sup>25</sup> This process seems to be the most visible on the stage of rising and first fascination with the new kind of media when society and man try to match new media to the already existing old artefactual conventions or create consciously or not, new artefacts. This phenom-

<sup>23</sup> Cf. R.W. Kluszczyński: *Spółczesność informacyjna...*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> See R.E. Rice: *Artifacts and Paradoxes in New Media*, [in:] D. McQuail (ed.): *McQuail's Reader in Mass Communication Theory*, London-Thousand Oaks-New Delhi 2002, pp. 125-133.

<sup>25</sup> See R.E. Rice: *Computer-mediated communication and organizational innovation*, *Journal of Communication*, 37 (1987), pp. 65-94; R.E. Rice: *Contexts of research on organizational computer-mediated communication: a recursive review*, [in:] M. Lea (ed.): *Contexts of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Hemel Hempstead 1992, pp. 113-144; R.E. Rice, U. Gattiker: *New media and organizational structuring of meanings and relations*, [in:] F. Jablin, L. Putnam (eds.): *New Handbook of Organizational Communication*, Newbury Park 1999.

enon in the case of traditional media was little appreciated and thus almost invisible in media analyses where media were not appreciated as an important element of culture artefacts. The dynamics of development and influence of new media on culture of interpersonal communication, on the structure and dynamics of changes of social processes has posed, in my opinion, newly this problem in the light of modern interdisciplinary media analyses. Not all, however, seem to notice and appreciate the appearance, together with new media, new media artefacts and they still try to analyze new media through the prism of traditional conventions and culture artefacts. In these analyses, there appears a frequently critical approach to new media which allegedly are to demolish traditional, often idealized conventions and forms of interpersonal communication.<sup>26</sup> An example of such analyses is the frequently formulated criticism of new media, charging them with a lack of elements of “interpersonality”. Such a criticism is, to a great extent, baseless, as it shows elementary shortcomings in the knowledge of functioning and potential of new media. New media give more possibilities of interpersonal communication, interactivity than the traditional mass media. New media give a larger possibility of personalization of communication processes. When the recipient becomes, at the same time, the sender, more possibilities appear as for the choice of ways of achieving proper levels of interactivity and interpersonal communication than in the traditional forms of mass communication. Thus it is necessary to break free of limitations which the artefactual conceptualization of all traditional media created. One cannot appraise the new media and their features only in a binary way, dichotomically (a medium “has it” or “does not have it”), from the perspective of idealized artifacts of interpersonal communication. Because the same content, which before existed in traditional records, now recorded in a digital form, can be now transmitted through many different media. Social conventions which privilege more some of the traditional media and ascribe them a greater role as artefactual factors, should rather be treated as a form of habits, fashion and tastes, than an actual role and possibilities of new media in social communication. Rice believes that artifacts link to traditional means of transmission have already been so much idealized that they no longer respond to new phenomena and media communication processes and do not suffice for their accurate description. In time an artifact which is constantly used undergoes – according to Rice – a structuring, and as a result of it, it is idealized so that positive social aspects are associated with the well-known media and especially with interpersonal communication. Whereas new media seem, according to this vision, to compete with interpersonal communication and they are associated with negative aspects of social communication.<sup>27</sup>

Jensen raises a similar conclusion, showing that new media are often analyzed on the basis of a few idealized metaphors (art, information, education), instead

<sup>26</sup> Cf. R.E. Rice : *Artifacts and Paradoxes in New Media*, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>27</sup> R.E. Rice : *Artifacts and Paradoxes in New Media*, op. cit., pp. 128f.

of on the basis of their full scope of possibilities and applications.<sup>28</sup> The criticism of new media, from the perspective of idealized artefacts, seems exaggerated and indifferent in relation with the positive influence of new media on the interpersonal communication. The latter does not usually yield to the same criticism which new media give in to. Perhaps it is related with the fact that social practice of interpersonal communication are much more rooted in society and culture, where indirect communication has, in some sense, a romantic character, idealized, even mythical, where interpersonal communication is still privileged. We agree with the Rice's thesis that new media are often compared and criticized from this privileged, artefactual and idealized vision of interpersonal communication.<sup>29</sup> He retains that an important aspect of research of new media and society should be an attempt of a better understanding of the artefactual character of media, in order to avoid prejudices in the understanding and criticism of new media. An example of such analyses are the works by Griffith and Northcraft<sup>30</sup>, Nass and Mason<sup>31</sup>, Meyrowitz<sup>32</sup>, where clearly separating features of particular media from the same media,<sup>33</sup> they create a new typology of media, which allows to understand better the role and function of new media in the creation of new artefacts of a media and interpersonal communication. Nass and mason created a very general typology of changeable media, in which an important criterion of division is stable features of social communication, unchangeable towards the changing external media. Meyrowitz bases his typology of media on three rules of the skill of using mass media: on using the content, on the knowledge of grammar of media as well as on the skill of using mass media. Thus, the basis of media artifacts is constituted not by the same changing media, but the features of media. New media have features of traditional media, they contain basic features of social and interpersonal communication. Therefore media artifacts in the media space of new media, in an informative society, are no danger for interpersonal communication, but they are, as every new cultural-social structure, a new challenge for an individual human being and community and they allow to discover and differentiate positive and negative aspects of the civilization development. The criticism of artifactual features of new media has to differentiate skillfully dangers from challenges.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. J. Jensen: *Redeeming Modernity: Contradictions in Media Criticism*, Newbury Park 1990.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. R.E. Rice: *Artifacts and Paradoxes in New Media*, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

<sup>30</sup> See T. Griffith, G. Northcraft: *Distinguishing between the forest and the trees: media, features, and methodology in electronic communication research*, *Organization Science*, 5 (1994), pp. 272-285.

<sup>31</sup> See C. Nass, L. Mason: *On the study of technology and task: a variable-based approach*, [in:] J. Fulk, C. Steinfeld (eds.): *Organizations and Communication Technology*, Newbury Park 1990, pp. 46-67.

<sup>32</sup> See. J. Meyrowitz: *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*, New York 1986.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. R.E. Rice: *Computer-mediated communication and organizational innovation*, op. cit., pp. 80-91; R.E. Rice: *Contexts of research on organizational computer-mediated communication...*, op. cit., pp. 123-138.

The basic challenge of the new media is the ethical sphere which requires clear universal and personalist criteria of evaluation.

New media technologies, like the traditional media, provide constantly new culture artefacts. New media reveal even more clearly the artefactual nature of social structures, determined, to a great extent, by the media communication. The analyses regarding the nature and functioning of new media show both the enormous role of media in shaping social patterns and individual behaviors, choices, evaluations and actions, and they reveal the variety of paradoxes in using media, paradoxes in evaluations and critical approaches to both traditional and new media. De Sola Pool writes about paradoxes related to a “double life” of media, about their positive and negative consequences for the life of a human being.<sup>34</sup> Orlikowski speaks about paradoxes conditioned by the media technology, about dualism of technology and culture.<sup>35</sup> De Sanctis and Poole write about paradoxes related to limitations in the usage of media.<sup>36</sup> Sproull and Kiesler analyze the variety of levels of media functioning and the paradoxes of the time and space compression of media transmissions.<sup>37</sup> All these analyses lead to ethical conclusions. They show, on the one hand, potential possibilities of new media in the creation of good in individual and community dimensions. Interactivity, divergence and convergence of media, interconnectivity of content, form and transmission allow, against colloquial critical opinions, for a greater personalization of media communication, for an open dialog, feeling of relationship, correlation, for a greater variety of ideas, experiences. On the other hand, however, the analyses of paradoxes related to new media show potential dangers of the media for man and community. The lack of solid, personalistically established rules and ethical criteria can cause such a usage of media which will release, intensify and broaden the processes of a multi-dimensional destruction of man and human community. Thus, we see that solid media research, from any perspective should it be carried out, it indicates *explicite* or *implicite* the need of existence and functioning of a universal ethics of media. Such an ethics should be the ethics of media, appreciating fully the role and place of man in the media space.

## 7. Conclusion

The notion of “mass communicating” loses its methodological precision and “terminological communicativeness” in the age of the digital media revolution because it does not correspond fully with the described reality. This way, the pos-

<sup>34</sup> Cf. I. de Sola Pool: Technologies of Freedom, Cambridge 1983.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. W. Orlikowski: The duality of technology: rethinking the concept of technology in organizations, *Organization Science*, 3 (1992), pp. 397-427.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. G. De Sanctis, M.S. Poole: Capturing the complexity in advanced technology use: adaptive structuration theory, *Organization Science*, 5 (1994), pp. 121-147.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. T. Sproull, S. Kiesler: Connections: New Ways of Working in the Networked Organization, Cambridge 1991.

sibility of an unambiguous methodological application of this terminology diminishes.<sup>38</sup> The aim of the present analyses was to show that the visible effect of the presence and functioning of the new media is a characteristic restructuring of the media space, where the character of the mass scale shifts from the area of standard transmissions, unified media contents to the areas of the effects of influence. It bears fruit of both conformity, homogeneity and a chaos, pluralism and mass scale of evaluations. A wide-ranging integration of media combines in itself both processes integrating and differentiating which remain towards each other, in a dialectical feedback. This feedback generates changes in the media space in the direction of a new integration. These changes are defined as media explosions or implosions, but elementarily it is about the progressive process of restructuring of the media space.

The progress of media technology conditioning the development of the new media,<sup>39</sup> on the one hand, more and more facilitates communication, information and educational etc. processes, but on the other hand, new media place man in the presence of many positive and negative challenges which cannot remain indifferent for so many fields of science, especially for philosophy, anthropology and ethics. A theoretical reflexion, especially the anthropological-ethical one, has to keep up with the technological progress and dynamic development of modern natural and technical sciences, providing the informative civilization with clear and universal evaluating foundations, for otherwise, the technical progress devoid of such a foundation and values can become a danger for man and civilization. The mediatization of life in the modern civilization seems to be an undoubted fact, available even in an ordinary colloquial observation. This process has, however, many consequences whose research and analysis demands interdisciplinary analyses which are a challenge for sciences of media and all other sciences dealing with the research of social communicating.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. J. T h o m p s o n : Media i nowoczesność..., op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>39</sup> K. B e c k : Neue Medien – neue Theorien?, [in:] M. L ö f f e l h o l z , T. Q u a n d t (eds.): Die neue Kommunikationswissenschaft. Theorien, Themen und Berufsfelder im Internet-Zeitalter. Eine Einführung, Wiesbaden 2003, p. 73.

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## STRESZCZENIE

### Mediatyzacja życia – próba zrozumienia zjawiska

Mediatyzacja przestrzeni życia człowieka jest konsekwencją zarówno postępu technologii medialnych, jak i masowości i pluralizmu współczesnych mediów. Niniejsze analizy mają na celu pokazanie niektórych aspektów procesów mediatyzacji życia, którą rozumiem jako wieloaspektowe zjawisko wykorzystywania w komunikowaniu społecznym technicznych narzędzi przekazu form symbolicznych. Moje analizy mają charakter sondujący wymiary tego zjawiska na podstawie zarówno empirycznej wiedzy o procesach zmian technologicznych w świecie mediów, jak również teoretyczno-filozoficznych koncepcji współczesnej mediosfery.

**Słowa kluczowe:** mediatyzacja życia, media masowe, nowe media, aksjologia mediów, komunikowanie, mediosfera, komunikowanie interpersonalne, człowiek i media