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## Multiculturalism in the new media

### Multiculturalism

The problem of multiculturalism has been analyzed in the literature more and more often. Globalisation transformations, intensification of mobility, learning about and taming diversity, the penetration and increased frequency of contact between people of different regions and cultures, the tendency to migrate temporarily or permanently lead to the interaction as well shaping of human behaviour and ways of understanding the world. It is important to note that for the phenomenon of multiculturalism to occur, it is not enough to have an accumulation of many cultures in one place, but their representatives must respect the jointly developed rules of social coexistence, establish rights and obligations, and show concern for equal opportunities to participate. Defining multiculturalism is a major challenge. Each community has a specific identity, language, tradition, religion and culture, which it does not renounce, but rather nurtures.

We call large, culturally diverse cities melting pots or mosaics of nationalities (ethnicities), drawing attention to neighbourhoods, temples, restaurants, shops, celebrated festivals or events, emphasizing the importance of this difference, uniqueness, individuality compared to others. We experience different cultures, respecting the rights of their representatives. We visit those that for some reason suit us best (boutique multiculturalism) (Śliz, Szczepański, 2015: 13-15). According to Gordon Mathews, we are dealing with a “cultural supermarket”, a “cultural jigsaw puzzle”, people of different cultures living in one place, but not forming a multicultural community (Mathews, 2005: 17-19). As Dagmara Janiszewska states, we are moving from a “world of roots” to a “world of choice”, “culture is increasingly a matter of taste” (Janiszewska, 2011: 20-21).

Building a multicultural society is a long-term process. Canada and Australia, whose authorities recognized the legal subjectivity of ethnic groups in the 1970s, are cited as examples (for more on multiculturalism in Canada see: Śliz, Szczepański, 2013; Day, 2000: 18-32; Banting, Kymlicka, 2010: 48-52; Lopez, 2000; Theophanous, 1995). Europe is also becoming multicultural, with the Basques in Spain and the Turks in Germany, for example, fighting for autonomy. The transformation of a society into a multicultural one is analyzed with reference to social exchange theory. Social actors from different ethnic

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groups interact with each other, pursue their interests, shape and participate in the social space, succumb to pressure from others and also exert pressure themselves, form bonds and coalitions, but also oppose and seek conflict. Recognition and exchange relationships take place between different groups. With a high degree of repetition, mutual trust is built up, social networks are formed, certain rules are recognized as valid. In this way, an intercultural understanding is created, manifested in tolerating others and respecting their rights (Śliz, Szczepanski, 2015: 16-21).

While analyzing the issue of multiculturalism, Kazimierz Krzysztofek draws attention to monoculturalism, when culture is used by politicians to build a state identity, sometimes with appropriated elements of the heritage of other cultures. He also proposes the notion of transculturalism, understood as a “permanent fusion of cultures”, in a sense a hybrid of them without the possibility of separation. It is then difficult to define identity, to indicate individuality, which is why there is an aversion to transculturalism. According to the author, all cultures intermingle to a greater or lesser extent, and multiculturalism should be understood as a certain continuum (Krzysztofek, 2001: 77-78).

Multiculturalism is problematic for those in power, as it can lead to tensions and conflicts. The idea of maintaining ethnic homogeneity in the state seems attractive, which may imply adopting the following strategies: (1) physical eradication of minorities, when we treat others as enemies, (2) ethnic cleansing, when we expel others from our territory, (3) assimilation, when we deny others the right to cultivate their traditions and culture, (4) sanctioned ethnic pluralism, when we allow others to live according to their rules, but deny the right to integration, exclude them from the community, treat them as inferior, (5) civic integration with respect for the right to difference, when we treat others as equals, include them in the community, respect cultural distinctiveness. The last model is described as the most appropriate in European democracies. But with ever-increasing mobility, ethnic diversity and migratory pressures, is it sustainable? We once saw the extension of the sphere of governance with a fixed censure to all adult citizens, should this sphere include all ‘newcomers’? Will civic integration not contribute to disintegration? Nowadays it is not only the suburbs of metropolises, selected neighbourhoods, but even city centres at times of highly attended meetings, which are not always safe. The diversity of multicultural communities, the interactions leading to social anomie, the feeling of helplessness, lack of purpose in life, not conforming to the expected rules of social coexistence lead to behaviour that threatens public order. Attempts at enculturation, finding interfaces of understanding, motivating cooperation may be a prescription, but the ingrowth of strangers into the surrounding culture requires time and effort (Krzysztofek, 2001: 79-83).

Anna Śliz and Marek S. Szczepański, referring to the understanding of multiculturalism, write: “Multiculturalism [...] means the coexistence within the state organism of individuals, communities and other forms of social collectivities characterised by a socially articulated cultural identity. But the mere co-existence of two or more culturally

distinct groups does not imply multiculturalism. Such a case is cultural differentiation [...]. Cultural differentiation is, therefore, the first stage in the evolution of societies that have embarked on the path of democratisation. The final stage is the state of multiculturalism, when permanent, multifaceted, and voluntary forms of intercultural contact occur, resulting in the production of a qualitatively new, culturally differentiated whole” (Śliz, Szczepański, 2013: 98-99).

The risk of ghettoisation is highlighted by Piotr Mazurkiewicz. Especially in large urban centres, hermetic cultural communities are formed. Their representatives do not feel the need to contact others if they have everything available in their immediate surroundings. Dealing with everyday matters often does not even require knowledge of the local language, and they can satisfy their needs for socialization via electronic communicators, even with family members remaining in their country of origin (Mazurkiewicz, 2020: 244).

Different cultures are also increasingly present in the virtual world. Communicating online leads to depersonalization, and ties not supported by personal relationships are more easily broken. On the other hand, content creators are no longer exclusively media corporations – social media users may accept other values, thus there is less pressure for political correctness (Paleczny, 2019: 20).

However, regardless of the form of communication and the means used, we are always somewhere ‘between cultures’. Experiencing multiculturalism creates disorientation and a sense of insecurity. Relationships ‘between cultures’ can take any form and the language or communication codes used evolve. Attempts to reduce the cultural distance, to reconcile sometimes conflicting requirements, take various forms. These transformations do not easily lend themselves to official codifications or statistical analyses. Tadeusz Paleczny points to only some of these phenomena when writing about “assimilation, acculturation, transculturation, amalgamation, accommodation, syncretization, hybridization, globalization, westernization, Americanization, creolisation, Europeanization, universalization” (Paleczny, 2019: 22-24).

The essence of interculturalism is defined by Jerzy Nikitorowicz and Marta Guzik-Tkacz as “the awareness and presentation of one’s own culture through comparison, cooperation, penetration into the essence of the patterns, symbols, values and principles of the other culture” (Nikitorowicz, Guzik-Tkacz, 2021: 26). In doing so, they draw attention to: (1) heterology, (2) transfer of cultural content, (3) dialogue skills, (4) mutual understanding, (5) cultural empathy (Nikitorowicz, Guzik-Tkacz, 2021: 26).

The policy of multiculturalism is most often implemented on the basis of regulations and legislation, through the construction of a social space that enables the integration of culturally diverse groups. In countries belonging to the European Union, the defence of the rights of all actors is assumed.

Anna Siewierska-Chmaj analyzes multiculturalism policy starting from European values. She draws on the Treaty on European Union, which refers to values such as free-

dom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, respect for the dignity of the human person and respect for human rights (Siewierska-Chmaj, 2016: 14; Treaty on European Union, 2016, Article 2). The European Union needs an identity. We have been convinced of its weakness first by the financial crisis, then by the migration crisis, BREXIT and the lack of a coherent position towards the Russian-Ukrainian war. The emphasized universality of European values can be called into question when the EU countries stand up for human rights in countries far away from Europe, whose legislation does not recognize human rights as valid, and on the other hand agree to regulate religious diasporas at home, in contradiction with human rights (Siewierska-Chmaj, 2016: 17).

Western European economies needed and still need migrants as labour force. Politicians have not bothered by the settlement of isolated communities in the suburbs of cities. Siewierska-Chmaj considers the biggest mistake of European multiculturalism policy to be the support of minority representatives through organizations representing them. The authorities, thus, deprived themselves of direct influence on individuals. In 1996, diasporas in the UK were empowered to adjudicate on their own in civil cases. In many European countries, Muslims are demanding the application of Sharia law. The author assesses: "The specifically perceived promotion of diversity, thus, degrades another European value – individual freedom. The rights of the community are being placed above those of the individual, which means a de facto gradual oscillation of European legal systems in a direction that contradicts not only the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, but also centuries of European tradition" (Siewierska-Chmaj, 2016: 19-21).

Another important observation concerns the instrumental use of European values by Muslims against Europe. They have a different vision of the world, a different value system, their laws are based on different premises. Siewierska-Chmaj states: "the rights that Muslims demand in Europe would not be welcomed by most Muslim governments. Europeans offer equal citizenship rights to newcomers when the latter are willing to comply only with legal rules that do not contradict Islamic principles and practice" (Siewierska-Chmaj, 2016: 22-24).

Janusz Hryniewicz gives a number of examples of behaviours and acts that are unacceptable in European countries or even contrary to the applicable law. These include arranging underage marriages, violence against women, mutilation, polygamy, among others. The author states that "within a single state, different legal systems are applied to citizens belonging to different groups" and the "primacy of custom over human rights is tolerated not only in the principle of non-interference of the state in the life of cultural communities, but also in the decisions of the courts of the EU states" (Hryniewicz, 2011: 7-9).

There are few politicians who describe themselves as opponents of multiculturalism. Europe is and will be increasingly multicultural. However, it is undoubtedly important to recognize the differences between multiculturalism and the politics of multiculturalism. Greater cultural distance may favour multiculturalism but at the same time be in-

compatible with human rights. The noble idea of creating an inclusive society encounters barriers that lead to the creation of parallel communities. A telling symbol of the lack of respect for faith, values, traditions is the abandonment in Europe of the manifestation of the celebration of Christmas (Siewierska-Chmaj, 2016: 27-28).

## New media

Defining new media, in particular determining the degree of novelty, is difficult due to the passage of time and the timing of our classification. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are developing rapidly. Their implementation is resource-intensive and time-consuming. The availability of particular solutions in a particular area is also an important criterion (Sajna, 2010: 133-134). However, as Radosław Sajna notes, the evolution of new media is not limited to changes in technology but implies “a whole range of transformations in the consumption, experience and organisation of media, resulting in new patterns of living and thinking. Therefore, this concept [...] must be treated in a very broad context and studied in numerous specialised and interdisciplinary studies” (Sajna, 2010: 139).

Magdalena Szpunar points out that the term new media appeared as early as the 1960s. Referring to an encyclopaedia edited by Jozef Skrzypczak, she defines new media as “all media techniques and technologies that have been in widespread use since the mid-1980s” and links them to “the spread of personal computers, satellite television and video” (Szpunar, 2008: 32-33; Skrzypczak, 1999: 375-376; see also: Carey, Elton, 2010: 4-5; Dewdney, Ride, 2006: 20-29). It is also assumed that new media are those that have emerged later than traditional television. The greater activity of the viewer, the potential for interaction, can also be used as a marker. Lev Manovich considers new media to be “analogue media converted to digital form”, recorded with a digital code, allowing free and immediate access to data, easily duplicated without loss of quality (Manovich, 2006: 119-120). In light of the above, a newspaper article printed in a magazine would be counted as old media but published on an electronic medium or on the Internet as new media. Thus, novelty would be determined by the manner of distribution of the work in question. Manovich considers the development of computing and multimedia technologies, which made it possible to record data in a numerical form comprehensible to computers, to be crucial in the emergence of new media (Manovich, 2006: 82). Commonly, new media are considered to be those that operate using the Internet (Stasiuk-Krajewska, 2012: 34). The authors of online messages are both private and public, amateur and professional, individual and group. The content posted is not controlled in a bureaucratic way, less monitored and censored. The digitization of data and the development of the Internet have enabled media convergence, i.e., not the replacement of previous solutions, but their interaction in a new environment. Henry Jenkins believes that “convergence involves [...] a move away from medium-specific content towards

content flowing between different media channels, towards increasing independence of communication systems, towards different ways of using media resources and an even more complex relationship between top-down corporate media and bottom-up participatory culture” (Jenkins, 2007: 235; Ilciów, 2009: 242-243).

A cognitively interesting overview of the functioning of media in the 20th century is provided in an anthology compiled by Maryla Hopfinger. She includes among the new media: radio, a long-playing record, a cassette tape, television, video, a CD, a computer and the Internet. At the same time, she draws attention to the development of media invented in the 19th century: photography, phonography and film. During this period, a culture based on words and print changed into an audiovisual one. Hopfinger’s assessment is that “written language has never had such an advantageous situation before – the repertoire of written, printed texts has never been so numerous and rich, and the social reach of these texts so extensive” (Hopfinger, 2002: 9-10). She identifies as distinctive features of the new media their relationship with technology and their role in message creation. She stresses that already the camera, invented in 1839, was considered a threat to tradition. It excluded the author of the work from the creative process and did not require a workshop or experience. Unlike the painter or the writer, the final effect was to depend on the efficiency of the machine and not on the craftsmanship of the author.

It is worth noting that similar controversy surrounds the use of new technologies today, as exemplified by the much-discussed likely loss of Adrien Brody’s Oscar-winning role in *The Brutalist*, where artificial intelligence was used to correct the actor’s Hungarian accent (Popielecki, 2025). According to Hopfinger, the analyzed media can be accused of making a technical registration, a reproduction, a certain representation of a real situation. She writes: “Audiovisual messages realized in this way repeat, quote, peculiarly make present a fixed reality. Hence, the communicative status of such messages consists in a constant oscillation between the power of illusion in evoking the real world and the awareness of the internal organisation of the message and the meaning-making intentions of the realisers” (Hopfinger, 2002: 11-12).

An equally important feature is the mass reach among potential audiences, which results from the technical possibilities, i.e., standardization, schematization and repetition. The commercialization of ventures and the egalitarization of participation can be regarded as positive effects, while the increase in the number of creators with differentiated offers, not always taking care of a sufficiently high level of communication, can be regarded as negative effects. Optimists see many opportunities in the Internet-based communication, but it is not without a number of risks.

### **Multiculturalism in new media**

The development of the Internet as a communication tool has enabled the emergence of media known as social media. Important features of social media are the low barriers

to participation, which are limited to having an Internet connection and an appropriate application, usually free of charge, the possibility to create and publish content, and the multidirectional message. Agnieszka Grzechynka further states the conditions that social media should meet: (1) users are identified by individual profiles, they submit to the rules imposed by the portal (application), (2) each user has the possibility to build relationships with other users, (3) users are visible and accessible to others (Grzechynka, 2022: 375-376). The characteristics outlined above are fulfilled not only by portals and apps, but also by blogs, sites for publishing and sharing documents and files, forums and discussion groups, Q&A portals, geolocations, microblogs, opinion sites, price comparison sites, sites for event organizers, meme sites, sites with photos, audio or video files, micro-video sites, social media platforms, crowdfunding sites, social news sites, wikis and messaging services. The objectives and needs of users determine the shape and development of a given medium. We can take the distinction between social, professional, publishing and consumer social media as the most general division. Among the socio-demographic characteristics, age plays the greatest role, as generation Z, as people familiar with digital technologies from birth, and generation Alpha, introduced to the world of social media from birth, are indicated. Their grandparents and parents are more likely to use Facebook and YouTube, and they are more likely to use Instagram and TikTok (Grzechynka, 2022: 376-381; Miotk, 2017: 28-41).

Media, including social media, influence culture. Grzechynka recognizes that they can be used in the areas of creating an inclusive platform for members, building a sense of community, promoting the achievements of cultural representatives, attracting new members, conducting communication, combating stereotypes, strengthening the commitment of current members, presenting elements of culture to other communities, and lobbying to strengthen the position of culture in society (Grzechynka, 2022: 382).

She analyzes the example of Catalonia, whose inhabitants can feel connected to both the Catalan and Spanish or European culture. It was social media that played a large role in the events of 2017. On Twitter, using the official accounts of politicians, there were real-time discussions and arguments, motivations for action and accounts posted. YouTube and Instagram were used to arouse and control emotions, but also to educate and build the Catalan identity. Communicators such as WhatsApp and Telegram made it possible to coordinate the actions taken. The Grzechynka points out that these media are “universally accessible, free, interactive and capable of generating [...] wide reach. [...] 80% of the Spanish population (more than 37 million people) use several social media platforms every day” (Grzechynka, 2022: 383-384).

The aforementioned generational division of society has been supplemented with the Beta generation at the beginning of 2025. This will include people born up to 2039, who will predominantly live into the 22nd century. By 2035, the Beta generation is expected to number just over 2 billion people and account for around 16% of the world's population. According to experts, as the children of generations Y and Z, who have faced

major social and economic challenges, the new generation will be characterized by “resilience, perseverance, and the ability to respond to uncertain times, but also a conservative outlook – a desire to save and reuse, not just increase possessions” (Rogalska, 2025). The people of the Beta generation will grow up in a reality co-evolved with artificial intelligence, in a world of technologies increasingly integrated into everyday life (Rogalska, 2025).

The building of interpersonal relationships is already taking place using digital space. The literature uses the term society 5.0 (Du Vall, 2019: 22-23). In 2024, 88.1% of the population (35.75 million people) were active Internet users in Poland and 68. % (27.90 million people) used social media (Kemp, 2024). In all likelihood, it can be concluded that we will increasingly move our activities into the digital world.

An example of this could be the “metaverse – a virtual reality concept in which users can move in a digital environment, integrating with each other in real time and creating a digital community. The solution combines various technologies (such as virtual and augmented reality, artificial intelligence, blockchain, games and social applications) to create a fully integrated digital environment in which the Internet users can reside and act in a way that is almost identical to the real world” (Grzechynka, 2023: 33). Agata Ruskowska writes more extensively about the metaverse. If the digitized reality seems unreal, the most real money can convince us of it. It turns out that “consumers are able to pay \$9,000 for a digital work of art, \$2,900 for a branded handbag and ... even \$75,000 for a virtual house” (Ruskowska, 2021).

The digital world and social media are still seen primarily as tools for entertainment, personal use and the promotion of consumption. People who are active in the digitized reality, citizens of the web, so-called netizens, identify emotionally with the digital solutions and declare their individualised identity. Attention should be paid to the clearly emphasized distinctiveness of online creators using tools other than YouTube, e.g., tik-tokers, instagrammers. In the aforementioned world of the metaverse, there will be a meta-community with its own language, ways of behaving, relationships, with its own traditions over time. Virtual currencies, certificates, characters and artworks are already in place (Rattle, 2022: 388-390).

The digital culture is not homogeneous, at the same time it is incomprehensible to the digitally excluded. People representing older generations may not want to participate in the digital world, yet it can be useful if only as a complement in the cultivation of traditions. Accepting digital culture does not mean having to give up one’s previous identity. Grzechynka proposes the notion of zero-culturalism, which “does not mean giving up culture, but only a metaphorical zeroing out of its external emanations, which no longer serve the individual and seem to contradict his or her own sense of identity”. In addition, she states that only “the form of cultural expression [of values] is changed in such a way that it corresponds to the evolution of time and place” (Grzechynka, 2023: 149).

## Summary

It seems natural to conclude that the existence of many cultures in one place can give rise to problems. However, with the changes of globalization, high and increasing mobility, crises of various origins, increasing cultural diversity is inevitable. Culture consists, among other things, of identity, tradition and religion, and allows individuals to self-identify and define their place in the world. Everyone accepts and accentuates their origins to a greater or lesser extent, but at the same time, in a globalized world, they experience elements of many other cultures, for example by visiting restaurants offering the cuisine of other nations.

Becoming a multicultural state can take place in different ways. In the EU countries, treating newcomers as equals, respecting their rights and culture, assumes an inclusive approach. The implementation of this assumption proves particularly problematic when there is a large cultural distance between countries and/or the rights of the newcomers' conflict with human rights.

Culture is shaped by the media. These, in turn, are subject to dynamic transformations due to technological developments. The evolution of the media has accelerated in recent years, linked to the spread of the Internet, the variety of digital devices and their innovative use. A digital world is emerging, and behavioural patterns are changing. Social media can be useful in influencing traditional cultures. Digital reality is a separate world, yet people rooted in the analogue world participate in it. Elements of digital culture are becoming more and more real.

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**Abstract:** The article emphasizes the importance of multiculturalism, paying great attention to its definition and to the observations made by numerous authors. The difficulties in implementing multicultural policies in the face of globalization changes are pointed out. People from different cultures find it difficult to communicate with each other, while the state authorities and NGOs can support assimilation and/or integration processes. The issue of the functioning of new media and their possible impact on culture was an important point of consideration. Particular attention was paid to digital culture. The article concludes with a generalizing summary.

**Keywords:** Multiculturalism, new media, social media, digital culture

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