NEW MEDIA – THE PHILOSOPHY MILLENIALS LIVE BY NEW MEDIA SAU FILOSOFIA GENERAȚIEI NET

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Abstract: *A generic term for all the IT enhanced electronic communication means, seen as opposed to the old media which covers the printed press, static representations of texts and charts, New Media refers to all that is websites, audio-video streaming, chat-rooms, emails, online communities, advertising sites, virtual worlds, mobile technology. Most of these facets are already integated into each and everybody's record, to be deeply anchored in present times, part of a European research community, a facilitator for developing new knowledge networks. One cannot live with new media but he can't do without it either, as new media is information, it is education and it is self-image, social presence, it means being alive.*

Keywords: *new media; education; information; promotion; identity; connection.*

Background information

The ever changing coordinates of our actual lives, the changes that happen both inside us and everywhere we look and go, changes triggered by social, political, economical and cultural factors have brought about a new modus vivendi which we all adopt to communicate, to socialize, learn, discover new things or build new worlds, whether we do it willingly or unwillingly.

While time and space have both suffered conceptual but also perceptive alterations, a common space has been bulit for all mentioned above. This common space can be approached anytime, anywhere and almost anyhow, by anyone, due to the incomensurable technological progress. *One click away* has become standardized measure for both space and time, paradoxically overlapping inches and minutes into one single indicator.

Concepts like New Media, web 2.0 and Social Media have become charaterized by ubiquity while the carrying channels are wish lists for users from six to seventy-six years old.

A relatively new environment, this virtual ever self-growing world still has enough to reveal while the research in this field still has a long way to reach the maturity of other scientific fields for which plethora of papers have been produced. However, since it is a young field, this New Media, as this is the name of the relatively newly born virtual ubicuitous field, as opposed to the Old Media (all the analogue channels of communication), has raised the interest of researchers who looked at it from educational, social, collaborative, behaviourist, political, subversive and even terrorist perspectives.

New Media stands for a new philosophy of the technology-based communication channels, while web 2.0 is the physical component of what the New Media issues, social media being, thus, the bridge that connects people who resort to web 2.0 in order to act in the New Media environments.

Defining the concepts- new media, web 2.0 and social media

What do we actually understand by new media? New Media is seldom taken as web 2.0 or social media, since research is still young in the field and has not been able to define the concepts clearly yet. That is why we will randomly select a magnifying glass to examine this concept which comes to contradict Old Media on the one hand- therefore to speak about something new, while on the other to highlight the idea that New Media is a philosophy whose hard core is web 2.0; what is certain is that new media is connected to using technology in an innovative way, to lead the carriages for education, information, socializing, trade and advertising, to lead the charriot of a new ego and a new image about ourselves. To better understand that New Media is the philosophy, we shall mention some of its charateristics just the way Lister[1] drew them in

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[1] M. Lister, et all, *New Media - A critical Introduction*, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 13-37.

2003, to later see the outer shell, the one represented by 2.0. Thus, among features he mentions:

- *Digitality* versus analogy, where analogue media defines data such as physical objects, whereas digital media works with binary systems, 1 and 0.
- *Interactivity*- being an interactive environment it means that the user can intervene and change the content to use it according to his own needs.
- *Hypertextuality*- defines a flexible structure and an inordinate number of possibilities to gather information, a structure where distribution and concatentation represent just the beginning of a transition from the classical text to the virtual, digital one (Zhang[2], 1998). Along this, hypermedia gathers images and sound, video and text in a single place, connecting them by means of different relations (Manovich,[3] 2001).
- *Dispersion*-by contrast to new media, traditional media is characterized by standardizing the content, production processes and distribution. Dispersion is descentrallization that creates a non linear media, which sends an inordinate number of messages to a heterogenous mass.
- *Virtuality*- the ability which new media has to technologically simulate aspects of daily life. This thing brings up the new concept „virtual reality", which is a simulated, interactive world, created with 3D technologies. The reality of the virtual world is often characterized by immersion and presence, which can be considered the new characteristics of a future new media, the so-called web 3.0.

New Media keeps developing and it attracts more and more users in a simultaneous progression to the technological development. Chronologically speaking, digital technologies have been available since the 30s, to a certain extent of capability related to interaction, collaboration and communication through networks among users in different geographical areas. The difference that the 21st century brings is tied to web 2.0 technologies (social networks, blogs, wikies, video sharings, mashups or electronic payment systems, sound editor, image and emails or instant messaging) and to their ability to facilitate descentralized control, that

[2] B. Zhang, Hypertext and Postmodern Textuality. *The CUHK Journal of Humanities,* Volume 2. 1998, London, p. 80.
[3] L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, MIT Press, 2001, Cambridge, Mass, p. 15.

is the user can upload, edit, adnotate the content online individualy or collectively, in a participatory manner, large scale, since web 2.0 is easily usable, friendly, non-discriminatory, open, democratic, transparent and it supports anybody"s voice irrespective of age, income, language spoken, location or operating system. Web 2.0 connects people with similar interests in a way that allows easy reachable connections. Web 2.0 is dynamic and bi-directional as the information flows to the participants without any effort taken by the latter, as the capacity to self-sort and self-clasify that web 2.0 has allows users to group information and tag it based on own intetests, in video of photo albums, setting basis for other virtual communities, connected among themselves, based on likes and dislikes, interests and common belonging to other groups.

The opportunities to access multiple perspectives, to offer personalized interpretations and reflections over thoughts other people have voiced are numerous and varied in the huge world of the internet, simultaneously with developing facilities for web 2.0 socializing- Facebook, Google+, Twitter, Tumbler, Linkedin as social networks used all over the world, blogger and wordpress as well as microblogging, used for chopped information, with short 140 character sentences, with individual images or video links simply called micro-posts. Along all these, wikiwikiweb firstly built n 1994 was the simplest database that was later on similar to the blog since there could be more text editors splitting the same topic and on the same web page, but it is also different from it as unlike the blog, the wiki page is not controlled by only one user/ admin. A wiki page can serve to knowledge management, it can be the site to a community and it can help build an inner organizational network.

We always learn, formally or informally, we develop and set up connections to later share what we already know or what we ourselves discover in others. Training in this context has become continuous, informal, non-formal, taking distance from the "brick and mortar" education.

The information environments are free from any stereotypes and the blogs, wiki-s or the social groups that allow us to write on, share or learn, even the podcasts are always present to serve us or to chain us, based on th pwer that we, the users, give them- this is where we get informed, where we socialize, rebuild ourselves as individuals in a parallel world. The term *social media*, on the other hand, is an umbrella term that covers anything that means web apps built around the user-generated-

content (Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2010). In other words social media covers all that is related to the interaction among individuals, to the process in which they create, exchange and share information and ideas within virtual communities and social networks. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) have provided a classification for social media, on six categories: collaborative projects, blogs and microblogs, common content communities, social networks, serious games and second life. Some have been welcomed with large interest and enthuhsiasm, being largely used, while others, more appropriate to the educational environments are still regarded with reluctancy.

Relationships developed by social media- the impact of virtual identity

Interconectivity generated by joining social media as well as designing a social personality releases personal information into the virtual space, thus data about age, gender, social and professional status and social interaction go public.

Relationships thus built and developed by accesssing and exchanging such information are nurtured with the internet and its apps and represent the social component of what social media means. Virtually built relationships have various goals. To what extent these connections, these relationships are useful or detrimental to the individual or to the group is a matter of interest for researchers. In this context one speaks about weak and strong ties / bondings (Granovetter[4], 1973): strong ties are people whom you trust and whose social circle corresponds with yours to a large extent, as they usually are people that are very similar to you. The youn ones, the ones with higher education degrees who live in urban areas tend to have various strong connections networks. Weak connections, on the other hand, are built with acquaintances mostly. Weak connections offer access to new information which otherwise do not float in the tightly connected networks of the strong connections. Why are strong connections in social media important? It is because:

• strong connections act upon emotionally disturbed people
• banks develop whole networks based on strong and weak ties with other corporatist organizations to sign more profitable businesses
• strong connection within an organization helps

the company survive a crisis situation, on the other hand it is also the strong connections that can bring change in an organization by generating a crisis.

As far as the type of social media that generates changes, research has proven that the weak ties rely on just a few of common media- for ex Facebook only- while strng ties bring diversity and consistency by specifically using more media channels- for ex. Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Whatssup, according to Haythornthwaite [5] (2002).

Social media as informative means

Social media has lately become a an important source for news and political information. The role of the news in social media is especially importnat since these sites offer various experiences to users, as different from the traditional media as possible. By comparison, the experiences offered by the old media is uni-directional, addressed to the targeted public, dependent upon the temporal and spatial proximity both in content and in spread. The *news seekers* in this case are simple users who get only that information generated by organizations, news agencies and they have little chance in expressing their opinion, as they consume the info in a predetermined timeframe.

With social media things are different, on the other hand-users have more control over the information environment, they can actively participate by selecting the content which they want to relate to in a moment they chose to be, while simultaneously they can disseminate the news they consider worthy to others. The easiness with which social media users can disseminate information to others turn the informative side of the social media be superior to the mass communication means, and it thus differentiate social media from mass communication processes. By means of social media the information product is bi-directional, the news consumer both receive, circulate and send information, by means of the same instruments offered by new media.

News reception through social networks sites (SNS) can happen in several ways - first the participants create their own account to receive the important titles from the news agencies, through postings on their walls. Also, the news agencies have their own social media walls so that users can

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4   M. S. Granovetter, *The strength of weak ties, American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 78, issue 6, pp. 1360-1380.

5   C. Haythornthwaite, *Strong, weak and latent ties and the impact of new media*, The Information Society, 18:385-401, 2002, Taylor& Francis.

visit these walls and look up information on their own. COnversely, a user can run across a piece of news, randomly, while looking actually for something else, surfing through their acquaintances pages. As far as the dissemination is concerened, similar to reception, it goes like this- users can attach links of the news on their walls so that all the users who visit their pages can see the new piece of information, or they can post links to the news on a group social page, so that the whole group can receive and circulate the news, or they can identify ceratin memebers in their acquaintances lists to whom the link can be sent.

It has often been said that "the most possible effect communication has is..... even more communication" (Chaffee[6], 1986) This is where the need to be permanently informed springs out, to be able to communicate and belong to a group with common views. And this is only because by interacting with others either through discussions or by disseminating information we carry out some human needs among which we can mention the neeed for social interaction, the need to be corectly informed when we state something, as well as the need for self-esteem confirmation.

The educational side in social media use

The more and more acute participation of the young generation but also of the older onest o virtual communication, the process of socializing and even virtual competition, all bring along the inherent educational component, seen as non-formal, informal and .. why not.. the intentioanlly formal education as well. Collaborative projects unfolded in the social media, products like wikipedia, demonstrate that a collective and previously unexploited intelligence can be accessed in proper conditions. Simulatenously, it is more and more often that educators try to find out new ways to use the cognitive surplus for didactical purposes. There have been numerous discussions on using blogs to develop and consolidate skills in critical thinking as well as creative writing or written expression, coherent and cohesive usage of words. Therefore, using blogs, or youtube as channels to diffuse creative products are not only associated with students ability to access and benefit the media and

online content but also to create, produce, publish, mentain and transfer what they have produced in real time sequels.

Social networks can very well be used for disseminating information to certain groups or they can be used just to create working groups, on subject they are interested in, managed by an educator or even a student. In this regard, information plays a capital role in building knowledge. For this yet, information must be very well documented, processed, stocked and distributed on educators' or students' sites.

The functions available on social sites includ options for organizing, allotting, distributing and commenting information on groups with invitation only- access, be it with or without the tutor's presence. Should we bring into discussion Redecker et al.'s vision[7] (2010) we need to mention that integrating the web 2.0 educational perspective including social media, the latter would act on four dimensions, both for the students'oriented virtual spaces and for the student-created ones. These dimensions are content, creation, connection and collaboration. Students can access a varied content through social media technologies, self-giving in themselves for the various pespectives and types of content. This access, according to Redecker contributes to equity and inclusion in the learning environment. Then students can create digital content using social media to later on be distributed. By distribution, students can connect wit their professors, teachers educators, experts and other members of the educational community using social media, in order to collaborate and disseminate materials of their own or of the others. Thus,both students and educators can „discover new ways to develop their own competences through active and creative methods" (Redecker[8] et all, 2010)

The marketing dimension in social media

Social media is a very generous environment for building and enhancing a company's reputation, since numerous users, various ages and social categories use certain social networks- especially Faccebook. In order to do this there are several issues to be considered-
a) An analysis to determine whether the values of

[6] S. H. Chaffee, and J. Schleuder, (1986), *Measurement and Effects of Attention to Media News.* Human Communication Research, 13: 76–107. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.1986.tb00096.x

[7] C. Redecker, et all, T*he impact of social media on learning in Europe*, Policy Brief, JRC Technical Notes, European Commission, 2010
[8] *Idem, Op cit.*

the promoted company are similar to the users that are actually the targeted public.

b) Identification of the values the facebook users has in order to be included in the targeted group or not- these are: stability, interest, a sense of belonging to the community

c) As far as the company prmoting itself in virtual environments is concerned, this one needs a recommendation from other users, given the communication ties and bonding they have. Here we need to consider that the Romanian user is passive in the online environments (he follows news and multimedia but seldom publishes some content himself) Thus, social media has the floor to express and promote more often than the user , and this is not something social media imposed, as it comes out of the mentality and the specificity of the Romanian user at the times this paper is written and published. At a closer look, the officials from Orion Learning Network (representatives of the Hull University) stated that Romania is in a stage of day-dreaming, as far as social media is concerned- there is a lot of dreaming combined with doubt, optimism that lacks substance, undocumented approach,lack of complexity or research fundamented activity. That is why universities need to open up programs to teach and train students into marketing or online public relations, duet to large development of social media use in any and every institution,be it state, private or ONG.

Conclusion

Instead of providing a conclusion, I will only say that all the things mentioned above are just a minor effort to undertand the young generation's philosophy of approaching life, learning and work, a new way to bond and to express their feelings, their fears and joys, to explore the world and gather experiences. Needless to say one must not fear or dear the new, as technology is here to stay, but it will not replace the humans entirely, ever. On the contrary, it will help us maintain what we have, bridging the gaps, the distances, bringing together common interests beyond words and sensitivity.

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