

REFLECTION UPON: COMMUNICATION IN THE PERIOD OF GLOBALISATION

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Abstract: *The progress in the sphere of information technology belongs among the most important conditions that have enabled the creation and development of global financial markets and economic globalisation. The globalisation era thus enhances technological capacities for human communication. The mankind has better means of communication than ever before, however even this aspect of globalisation is not accepted unambiguously.*

Author has paid attention to certain ambivalence of this issue, considering clearly positive as well as negative aspects. The article is drawn up rather as a reflection upon the issue and has no ambition to encompass it as a whole – the authors only reflect upon some parts of the topic and outline them.

Key words: globalisation, communication, human communication, communication, connection, communication technology, communication deficit, Internet, media, ambivalence

1 Introduction

When thinking about the beginning of the article we discovered an interesting sentence of Alf Hornborg: “One of the most difficult and least curable diseases of this life is drifting between nostalgia for communitaes, a desire to be a part of something stronger than the fragile “Self”, and a fear of losing identity. Communitaes and communicatio have, undoubtedly, the same root and thus this sentence reminded us of another real story, an argument between our colleagues on whether an ordinary man when travelling long-distance by bus searches for a free double seat or prefers to sit down next to someone else. The situation in different animal species is much simpler; in the animal kingdom, there are definite solitaires and many other species live in groups that are organised in a different way. No other animal species shows such a significant dependence of one member on the other; apart from the human society we cannot find such a complicated social structure and diversified and complicated forms and manners of communication anywhere. Naturally, humans as well as animals exchange information.

For instance bees communicate via dance to tell each other where suitable food is to be found, dolphins and even elephants communicate via sounds of a wave length that is nearly inaudible for the human ear, and monkeys can express anger, rage, dissatisfaction or satisfaction by their grimaces. However, with respect to human communication it is incomparable – humans communicate approximately by 6 000 different languages.

In the *human* world communication technologies have often considerably contributed to the shaping of important civilisations – the discovery of papyrus and hieroglyphs nearly 5 000 years ago formed the life of Egyptians; ancient Greeks concentrated on spoken word, drama and philosophy; Romans developed a single system of language unity that served as a basis for the Roman alphabet while the discovery of typography by Johann Gutenberg has, without any doubt, opened new ways of education, learning, thinking and communication and it can be rightly compared with the discovery of America in 1492.

And what about the last 100 years! Communication technologies have been developed by an astonishing speed. Radio, film and television have had a great impact on the society for several dozen years. Information highways such as the Internet seem to be an unmatched

medium that combines several functions: information transfer, quick mail, entertainment, etc. In fact it means that we can provide and transfer an enormous amount of information nearly immediately. However, there is usually so much information that we do not know what is important and what is not. Modern media change our world every single minute, every day and so a question arises who controls who. An individual can never comprehend everything and so he or she is subjected to the selection of information that is presented to him or her. An impact of the storm of negative information that bombards the public every day through the news is often pointed out. Up to which degree, however, this *gushed* information distorts the reality? An experiment with a radio station broadcasting only positive news was made in the U.S.A. in the 1980s – it went bankrupt soon after its establishment. On this occasion we have remembered a cartoon with a typical picture of Albert Einstein: “*We have succeeded in proving that the future seems black because only negative information can move faster than the speed of light i.e. against the arrow of time*“.

2 Communication in the Period of Globalisation

Nevertheless, let us go back to the idea of the Internet as a communication superhighway or communication super fast train. Communication basically behaves in a very similar way as its homonym – transport, railway communication. There are large junctions and big stations where a fast train can be taken as well as small stops where a fast train rarely stops. However, there are also many of those that are remote and there are whole areas passed without any notice. Due to that the accessibility is essential for the use of the transportation as well as the information potential.

The above notion is closely related to a question whether the enhancement of the quality of human communication at the beginning of the third millennium is adequate to the increase of the number of and quality and quantity of communication channels. Human communication has many shapes from its intimate forms to mass communication. It uses verbal as well as non-verbal form, adequate speech registers from familiar to formal. We learn to communicate in an assertive way, we learn to lie and manipulate, say half-truths, pretend. We read and write books on communication differences between men and women or adolescents, we might even chat, make jokes and chatter. We also know very well how to hurt by words but can we really communicate? How our manipulation techniques differ from renaissance intrigues? We use rudeness usually in a different way than the earthy farming population of the 18th century, surely in a more civilised, sophisticated way. On the other hand we can smile without having anything to say, anything to give. Because of that the French philosopher Baudrillard writes about a missing identity which we substitute by an auto-prophetic smile and a false set of teeth; namely Americans have much experience with it.

When considering the progress in computer technology and, in our particular case, communication technology it is fascinating again and again to observe the incomprehensive speed of operation of current electronic devices. Faster and more powerful computers have been continuously developed. The fact that we can build devices that are so fast is caused by a natural law that the speed of electromagnetic waves that carry a signal is approximately $3 \cdot 10^8$ ms⁻¹ (the speed of light). Due to that we should think about a certain paradox of the existence of such a powerful potential of communication channels and a deep communication deficit that a considerable part of the population suffers. Poet John Berryman who ended his life by suicide once written: „*We are ill to the degree to which we hide our Self within us*“. These words, which he said could perhaps serve as a memento also for the others. One of the characteristics and needs of each human being is a desire to be accepted in a positive way and a desire for one’s own free self-expression. However, are we, people at the beginning of the 21st century, able to open ourselves and our weak or darker sides via open communication at

all? Are we able to accept difference, otherness or weakness without misusing it or degrading it in any other way?

Compared to the past there are some progressive phenomena. Platforms for open society have been created, issues that used to be a taboo have been discussed in press, media and even in public. Is it, however, real communication? Is it real sharing, partnership, joining which is how communication is defined? V. Just in his book *Slovník floskulí* (Dictionary of Rhetoric) presents an interesting idea of communication degradation in totalitarian regimes – communication takes place there at the level of words but not at the level of ideas and notions. In democratic regimes communication seems to be fuller but, despite that, it is not able to get rid of empty, contentless and sterile phrases. Even though more sensitive people try to communicate in a meaningful way at all levels of their private and public life and such communication should and could replace a dialogue of the deaf where no one really listens to no one and each party is sure of their own truth, we agree with the idea of the American psychologist J. Powel: “A real communication talent associated with listening and accompanied by empathy is, indeed, very rare. If you or I meet five good learners during the whole life we shall be lucky.”

So why the real communication, if we want to understand is in the true content of the word, *staggers* so much behind the fast development of channels carrying it? It is as if the developed world is closed in electromagnetic impulses and steel *wires* of the running *technological steed*. Those who cannot catch up with its *gallop* are simply unlucky. P. Jehlička writes in his book *Stát, prostor, politika* (The State, Space and Politics): “*The development of globalisation has been influenced owing to information technologies (in particular telecommunication and the World Wide Web) in three major areas (goods and capital trade, management of multinational corporations, mediation of information, consulting and financial services). New information technologies serve for express communication and fast negotiations of business contracts between companies from different countries of the world. Information technologies also allow for trading on world financial markets (i.e. a fast transfer of information as well as the detection of financial transfers between various parts of the world.)... The role of knowledge and information has increased in order to create profit and ensure competitiveness.*

Another category of companies has started to differentiate – companies aimed at environment attractiveness. Environment attractiveness tends evokes within people a view towards beauties of the nature, quality of the living or housing environment; in this case, however, in addition to that it means providing a territory with technical infrastructure – which is represented, in particular, by a perfect communication network and perfect telecommunication services.

Those who have no information, no technological facilities or those located in a part of the world where the information boom and network communication is a *terra incognita* has basically no chance to catch the *running steed*. Another problem is that, most probably, nobody knows exactly where it runs. Gabriel Marcel once wrote: “*You feel bound, you dream of escape. However, beware of illusions. If you want to escape, do not run away, do not flee, deepen the tight space given to you. If you are escaping from yourself your prison will run after you and it will squeeze you even more when travelling in the wind.*” This little excursus into the world of fiction came to our mind when reading an article in a magazine for the youth called: *Angelina and Agent 007*. The article was dedicated to a several-month communication full of ambiguous hints, jokes, sparkling intelligence and humour – i.e. *up-to-date* communication – indeed via the Internet. The article ends by a meeting of both major protagonists: she – an obese girl with glasses, he - a thin boy with acne; the meeting takes a form of a dull conversation over Coca Cola at McDonald’s followed by disappointment and

break up. She goes to the Internet at home using a new, fictive name of Madonna; he takes his chance as Legolas. Is there anyone at all with whom, at the of sixteen, they can talk openly in the *globalisation era* without risking their personalities?

3 Conclusion

Like them, we - adults – have many fast and effective communication *channels* but very often we are able to use them only for futile words... or perhaps money. We do not say it is always like that but we dare say it is often the case. The mankind has another *toy* – modern information and communication technologies – let us hope that it can grow out of adolescent trainers full of irresponsibility, fear, egoism and defiance and be able to use this feature accompanying and, at the same time, evoking globalisation to move the humankind forward at least by a tiny bit. Despite all the criticism we must recognise that an ancient dream of humans to communicate long-distance immediately has been coming true and with little exaggeration – nearly via *extrasensory perception*; we are able to get in touch with an individual on the other side of the world right now. It sounds as if from the Tales of Sindibad; and it is only our fault that we cannot fully appreciate this miracle but that we can only use and, often, misuse it.

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