

Sylwia JASKUŁA

Łomża State University of Applied Sciences

e-mail: sylwia.jaskula@poczta.onet.pl

INFORMATION CULTURE IN INTERCULTURAL SPACE

MODERATION OF VALUES

ABSTRACT The current role of information culture is combined with the change of the role of information in modern media civilization. This gives rise to new educational needs, including multicultural education, with relevant education in the field of information competence as its important element. In the new space of presence of a man, which is formed as a result of the interaction of real and virtual resources, these competences become more intercultural. At the same time, the diversity of cultures in space and their variability in time results in a lack of uniformity in the interpretation, perception and analysis of information, which leads to difficulty in defining a uniform model of culture and information competency. In this reality one of the main challenges facing today's cultures becomes keeping up with the changes of the information society and the dynamics of contemporary information culture which are generated, exceeding the barriers of stability, sustainability and predictability.

Keywords: information culture, intercultural space, values in information society

The concept of information has accompanied mankind since its very beginnings, but it is the contemporary development of the information society and technological advances associated with it that greatly increased the importance of information culture. This increase is linked to the creation of a new social and cultural reality which for the first time in the long history of mankind is a subject to numerous processes of transgression, thus transitioning and exceeding the boundaries of what man has previously achieved, developed or any area he embarked on. At this moment as never before, these areas are significantly expanding, which happens due to the technical and technological progress, the development of the human symbolic imagination, and man's possession of a variety of skills and competencies, particularly those associated with the ability to use the strategic resources of new forms of civilization (such as information resources) but also communication skills developed through them.

Current information resources have increased due to the expansion of human presence which also applies to the information space. This new information space, formed as a result of the interaction of real and virtual resources, has become a place of information exchange that is outside the traditional boundaries. Shaped through the interaction of a great number of subjects, it is part of dynamic, often virtual – and as such 'disembodied' – communication processes. The combination of classic and virtual elements of such space generated the need to redefine the understanding and significance of information culture which, as it constitutes a part of both virtualization and mediation of culture, ceased to be a steady state and instead has become a volatile and intense process. Therefore, it has gained different functions while its role and the intensity of changes have acquired a new significance in the context of new forms of cultural mobility. These, on the other hand, lead to a different perception of cross-culturalism which in the virtual dimension is distinguished by the reduced significance of cultural differences, minimized through frequent meeting of cultures. The cultural dialogue that occurs in the cyberspace is spontaneous and natural. The changing understanding of intercultural processes which currently satisfies human desires for crossing the boundaries of one's own culture still requires a more acute, in-depth and reflective skills of existing and functioning along cultural (intellectual, mental, social, political etc.) frontiers.

The expansion of human presence into the virtual space creates a need and necessity of a new understanding of cross-culturalism and cross-cultural processes which lead to their interpenetration, synergy, convergence or symbiosis. Information culture which undergoes similar transformations gains a new meaning due to new methods of cultural interaction. Individual pieces of information analysed in separate and self-reliant cultures would be attributed a different meaning than under circumstances of the enhanced fusion of varied cultural context.

VIRTUAL SPACE – THE FIFTH DIMENSION

The development of new technologies that form part of the everyday reality inevitably leads to major modifications in the social structure and culture, along with norms and values which create bonds between people and societies. The quantity, quality and complexity of current changes due to their unprecedented intensity are called “the great disruption.” The Internet is a crucial building block in the information revolution, interpreted as both its cause and its subsequent effect. Undoubtedly, the Internet has become one of the most powerful tools in the hands of the information society which ensures the free flow of information, and furthermore, one which has revolutionized the modern world.

The nature of the Internet and its potential is still unexplored due to its constant and rapid evolution, complexity and undefined ontological status. It can be defined from a technological perspective but measuring its potential impact on the human presence remains an enormous challenge. Tomasz Goban-Klas (GOBAN-KLAS 2004: 39) observes that despite virtual reality being only an illusion the influence of the Internet on interpersonal relations is a fact. Therefore, due to the development of information and communication technology the space of human presence has acquired a new dimension – the virtual space. Its uniqueness should also be examined in terms of the fact that it goes beyond dimensionality and exceeds the currently known physical parameters.

There is an intuitive belief, deeply embedded in the human brain, that people live in a three-dimensional world, i.e. any object can be interpreted as a three-dimensional object and described according to its width, length and depth. The late physicist, Heinz Pagels (PAGELS 1985: 324), observed and commented on this phenomenon – “One feature of our physical world is so obvious that most people are not even puzzled by it - the fact that space is threedimensional.” Einstein extended this concept by adding time as the fourth dimension. Scientists today want to go beyond Einstein’s concept of the fourth dimension, with the desire to observe the higher dimensions. The topic of hyperspace is becoming more and more popular among modern physicists; in recent years, Kaluza – Klein theory (also called the superstring theory) which suggests that there are ten space-time dimensions is enjoying a resurgence of interest.

In order to fully understand the essence of human presence in the virtual space it might be advisable to transfer it into the new, fifth dimension. The perspective, generated through the development of new technologies, would undermine the deeply rooted concept of three (or four if time is included) dimensions, an extensively debated topic dating back to famous Greek philosophers over two thousand years ago; on the other hand, such practice would make it possible to put an interpretation on many processes that take place in the virtual realm. Today, scientists are more and more aware that any four– dimensional theory is “too small” to describe all of reality and modern phenomena. An example of this limitation is the deep-rooted belief that each part of the world

is connected in an orderly way, i.e. a particular door always leads to the same, familiar place that remains unchangeable and predictable. On the contrary, the ease with which the virtual reality can be changed is impressive; when entering a particular website no one expects to see the same image as they did the day before – change is, in fact, expected. Accordingly, web developers aim to modify the content on a regular basis and invent new forms that aim at attracting attention. Moreover, there is never any certainty that a particular website still exists or whether it has been taken over by someone else.

Another interesting subject that arises when examining the new patterns of human presence is the possibility of a connection between the real and the virtual world, as well as the question of how and to what extent it is possible to transfer from one world to another. Such transfer between the parallel worlds¹ is somewhat similar to moving through the space-time tunnel. These parallel worlds, which could be compared to two parallel planes, are completely unrelated until the construction of a tunnel that one could travel and communicate through is completed. The multiplicity of connections between the virtual and the real world is due to the fact that it is possible to move from one to the other at any time and as often as necessary, despite one's online presence being only a mental existence.

The problem with understanding the nature of virtual space and its relationship with reality could lie in the fact that it is impossible to visualize multidimensional space. The impossibility to see the fifth dimension (if we follow Einstein's concept that time serves as the fourth dimension) is often compared with the inability of a blind man to grasp of the concept of colour. According to Michio Kaku, who popularized the concept of multidimensionality, evolution may ultimately be responsible for the human lack of ability to visualize higher dimensions. So far man had to escape the dangers that existed in four dimensions, and as a consequence the human brain did not develop skills needed to access higher dimensions (Kaku 2011). Peter Freund, a professor of theoretical physics at the University of Chicago's Enrico Fermi Institute, was one of the first to work on hyperspace theories when they were still viewed to be too extravagant for mainstream physics. In order to explain why higher dimensions excite the imagination of the scientific world Freund used a metaphor in which he compared the laws of physics in their natural space to a cheetah that roams freely on the savannahs of Africa; analogically, the laws of physics measured in a laboratory are like a cheetah that was captured and placed in a zoo cage, where it loses its original elegance. It is important to note that perhaps the same mistake occurs when making an attempt to analyse the phenomenon of the Internet that is based on a real-world perspective. Thus a possibly worthwhile idea would be to formulate the laws of the virtual world in the multi-dimensional space-time, as in such circumstances they are likely to become uncomplicated, understandable and might allow the development of more advanced theories. This necessary transformation consists in the realization that the comprehension or even the study of phenomena requires a proper environment, natural in its essence.

¹ The real and the virtual world can be described as "parallel worlds;" the existence in either one is independent, an individual can exist in them interchangeably; naturally, in one of them only in a metaphorical dimension.

The creation of virtual space raises an increasing number of questions about relationships, coexistence, connections, references, transfers, but also about differences in relation to the traditional space described in literature as the real one, which is indicated by the physical dimension. Just as fascinating is the human ability to move, exist, co-create and function simultaneously in the two worlds that are equally close and distant. Man, who for thousands of years struggled to adapt to life on Earth needed only few years to learn to exist in the virtual space which he adjusts to the familiar reality. At the same, he transfers all his past experiences, both conscious and unconscious, into this newly designed sphere.

The reflection on the duality of human presence raises questions about the impact that the two spaces have on each other, that is how the virtual space influences the real space and vice versa.² It is obvious that the virtual space cannot exist without its real counterpart (one-sided implication) because it is built by real individuals independently of what images of themselves they create or what roles they adopt there. The appearance of one-sided implication in this case is not, however, so strikingly clear and obvious; furthermore, determining the kind of symbiosis between these two spaces is equally difficult.

New spaces – created through the interaction and influence (but also as a result of needs) of many subjects, which become part of dynamic, often significantly “disembodied” processes of communication thus combine both classical and metaphysical or symbolic elements. Regardless of whether the modern online space (or spaces) is still a structure of primary interactions or an already developed civilization, it is a place which creates numerous opportunities but also leads to many dangerous or even pathological situations. The extent to which it is possible to understand and make use of the virtual space remains an open question. Even more intriguing is the potential of the duality of the two worlds – the real and the virtual one – achieved by combining their values and resources, and above all by opening up to new possibilities.

VIRTUAL SPACE AND SIMMEL’S SOCIOLOGY OF SPACE

The social construction of space is one of the main concepts that contribute to the development of social thought in the works of Georg Simmel. The main ideas concerning the sociology of space were presented in his two essays, “The sociology of space” and “On the spatial projections of social forms,”³ both first published in 1903, in which Simmel discussed socially relevant aspects of space, the impact of spatial conditions on

² The division into the real and virtual space is merely conventional, because determining the boundaries of interpenetration, coexistence and separation of these two dimensions causes a major difficulty, and often it is even impossible to resolve. The virtual world is created in the real world and some ideas and designs are often spontaneously transferred from the virtual space into the real one. However, for the purpose of this paper, in order to perform a thorough analysis and draw valid comparisons these two terms are used separately.

³ Original title “Über räumliche Projektionen sozialer Formen.”

social interactions and the forms of social, physical and psychological distance. Typical of his work is the fact that in his analysis he does not provide an organized theory of space; on the contrary, he introduces vague concepts, examples and contexts which can be seen as the early beginning of a further discussion as they provide his followers with ideas and inspirations within the sociological, pedagogical and interdisciplinary approach to "space," at the same time creating the basis for a new model of cultural studies.

A theory of space formulated about one hundred years ago in many areas resembled a combination of contemporary human presence and the virtual dimension. This new area of human activity which makes extensive use of the Internet creates new forms of space which are difficult to define as it is impossible to provide their description in terms of the physical distance between the channels. By the same token, an attempt to provide a definition of its characteristics is equally futile as the currently used terms were coined under conditions that no longer exist and their use in relation to the space of our contemporary presence has a purely metaphorical character. Contemporary problems were easily circumvented by Simmel who in his descriptions of space replaced the aforementioned metaphorical character with spirituality. Undoubtedly, it must not be discounted that in 1903 only a small number of scientists could envision the possibility of existence of many dimensions other than physical, which is why the approach where human existence goes beyond its physical attributes was truly innovative. For Simmel space is more than an orderly social life in its material shape; it is the product of social relation, constituting at the same time the mediation of these relations. Whilst it is a result of human activity, it also influences this activity and determines its course. This idea corresponds to Simmel's complex understanding of philosophy which in his opinion should not explore only the outer world but also concentrate on the inner world.

Such understanding is presented in "The sociology of space" in which space is merely an empty form that is modelled by subjective preferences and relations between individuals. These two elements – form, which is a sort of regular pattern, something that stimulates certain behaviours; and content, that is what is happening at the very moment combined with its individual character – are mutually influential, they interpenetrate and create a new value in the process.

Worth-mentioning in this context is the juxtaposition of the interpretation of Simmel's theory and modern space of human presence that combines both real and virtual elements, and consequently is, to a great extent, de-territorialized. Modern space that defies any description in terms of physical distance of the channels becomes part of dynamic, often virtual and substantially "disembodied" processes of communication. The imagery of this space destroys the colloquial character of its understanding because it is impossible to describe it parametrically using only physical categories. In the virtual space individuals are always suspended between what is real and what is not. What follows is the reinterpretation of the human physical realm as it becomes a collection of data incorporated into network (or sociocultural) structures. However, to Simmel it was the Earth that was essential to his understanding of the physical space, as it forms the condition for the implementation of three-dimensional space for human purposes. Simmel's approach to spatial analysis is motivated by his desire to prove the rela-

tion between social structures and physical categories of time, weight and dimensions which he described as the “geometry of space.” Still, his concept allows the idea of its non-physical forms, in which “modifications of the real energies are indeed revealed.” Therefore, space is not defined merely by a geographical expanse but also by the “psychological powers.”

While facts occur in specific spatial conditions, the space itself is seen by Simmel as the “activity of the soul” formed by joint experiences and sensations. Socialization has created the possibility of generating space through spiritual participation and spiritual possibility for the coexistence of individuals. This concept was influenced by Kantian thought in which space is an abstract concept; therefore, the world is a collection of physical objects in abstract space. Simmel in his conception of space involved the process of socialization by adding to it the spatial reality of social life. The modern world of human presence enlarged by the virtual dimension is, similarly to Simmel’s view, a peculiar “activity of the soul.” The world that combines both traditional and unreal elements is shaped by conscious human activity with its symbolic character, which is yet determined by emotional, strongly evaluative states that can adapt space to their own ideas whilst simultaneously experiencing it. In modern virtual space, formed primarily by the Internet, individuals are suspended between what is real and what is not. What follows is the reinterpretation of the human physical realm as it becomes a collection of data incorporated into network (or sociocultural) structures.

It is important to note that modern (virtual) space should not be placed in direct opposition to Simmel’s conceptualization of space. The more than a century-old theory has many corresponding features to the modern concept, and the two seemingly contrastive ideas are mutually exclusive, yet at the same time they complete each other.

One obvious difference is the priority category for defining location in a precise, parametric way. In the modern space the idea of location loses its value, there is no reference to the classic ideas of physical existence. Nothing is really linked to any particular location parameter; moreover, the need to identify the specific physical location disappears – in fact, it is by any means impossible. Even though Simmel’s social structures are not defined spatially, they are fixed; however, they do not divide space according to quantity but rather according to function.

Another category that differentiates the traditional and modern understanding of space is the category of time. In modern space time loses its importance because it is possible to access virtual space beyond any time frame which can therefore be overlooked. This insignificance of time in virtual space stands in complete opposition to Simmel’s idea of time, where all human activity is subordinated to specific and defined time window, with time being one of the physical categories of the aforementioned “geometry of space.”

Next characteristic that Simmel mentions is the exclusivity of space understood as the possibility of existence of only one general space. The people who operate within that space or within its fragment become part of it and as a result they too gain a sense of uniqueness. Therefore, the simultaneous presence in two or more places is rather improbable, conversely to what is achievable in the virtual space. Because it does not re-

quire the physical presence of an individual his presence is mediated (tele-presence) by the unity of man and technology which often leads to many unintended consequences. Moreover, tele-presence is not limited to the virtual reality but it reflects the rise of two perspectives, i.e. the virtual and the real one, along with all the fusions, flows or designs.⁴

Another key feature of space that Simmel discusses is the existence of spatial divisions and boundaries. The boundaries Simmel emphasises are not typically physical as they are not determined naturally but rather they mark the place for experience and interaction through social goals. The process of determining these boundaries is highly subjective, making it possible to discuss subjective boundaries such as the cultural ones. They are so distinct that they design the living space of society whilst uniting it internally, forming reciprocal interactions and relations between the members. At the same time the boundaries in Simmel's view are spiritually active, i.e. they have a possibility of change, movement, extension or junction. Simmel defines them as a neutral state between the offence and the defence expressing latent relations between the neighbours. Therefore, the existence of subjective boundaries established by the mental unity of individuals is possible when the intensity of cultural contact and the extensiveness of space meet. Only the psychological boundaries are considered real by Simmel (SIMMEL 2008: 373): "Granica nie jest faktem przestrzennym o znaczeniu socjologicznym, ale faktem socjologicznym, który kształtuje się przestrzennie."

A similar principle of extraterritoriality applies to the modern space. Its boundaries are independent of the physical, material or biological range within which man can move during his daily existence. However, the boundaries are metaphorical and refer to the social or individual regulations.

The divisibility of space and the existence of borders outline different areas inhabited by societies with unique features that characterize interpersonal relations of both internal and external character. In fact, Simmel emphasizes that the creation of group structure depends on spatial relations of its members. The function of space is to consolidate; however, it does not mean to transfer this consolidation rule (which is viewed as stabilization and long-term order) from this space to social relations, but rather to understand that the higher the level of consolidation, the lower the need for regulation and control. Still, it indicates a strong bond between society and space. What connects the traditional mindset with the modern space of human presence is "the pivot point" that is, when spatial fixity of an object of interest causes certain forms of relations to group around it. Thus, in the virtual space social relations are formed mainly around themes that unite individuals and that are fixed and steady. However, it must be noted that modern space is a powerful tool of liberation from local, contextual and physical limitations, where the possibility of moving from one place to another (or even to a number of places at the same time) gradually increases. Today's idea of mobility of

⁴ The first of these perspectives immerses man in the substantially fictional world, while the latter introduces an irremovable distance between the two worlds because to exist in one of them is only possible with the use of technology. Tele-presence means existing in two places at the same time – the feeling of being present in both of them, with the often unconscious problem of "ontological security."

information is no longer limited by methods of its exchange. The presence of man in this new space is not merely confined to the physical presence in the world with stable, clearly drawn borders; instead, the individual can have an impact on this world and has the possibility of constructing the virtual space.

The need to overcome physical distance lost its importance due to the different nature of objective and real distances in the virtual world, often replaced with the wide span of meanings, approaches and cultural values as determinants of the new type of space, in which there is a distance of images, visions and perceptions; it is the space that realigns the reality through their representations and their mental constructs and as a result develops new skills and capacities.

Furthermore, human activity also changes as it becomes dynamic, spatially dispersed, generally difficult to locate and often taking place simultaneously in different locations. This new environment has become a source of various sensations for people involved in it, thus acquiring a self-referential character (i.e. aimed at improving the observer's own sense of direction) instead of a hetero-referential character (i.e. directed at other people's attitude and place) (LUHMANN 2000: 9-14). The diversity and ambiguity of the new place of human presence contributed to the loosening of social ties – they evolved from strong bonds created by the mutual environment, history and context to abstract ties often devoid of face-to-face interaction (VIERKANDT 1928; cf. VAN DIJK 2006; MAY 2002). It is important to note, however, the existence of the virtual social network; virtual space is where relations that would not have a chance to develop otherwise are fostered. The result of the space generated by technologies is the possibility to build and maintain a community in the absence of geographical proximity. Virtual communities go beyond any traditional models of society and their communities, forms of solidarity and identity. The temporary character of social ties and lack of commitment are characteristic of all virtual relations and contacts. In contrast, human relationships in Simmel's sociology are conditioned by spatial distance, thus social influences have a different nature depending on whether or not there occurs spatial separation of individuals.

INFORMATION CULTURE IN THE FIFTH DIMENSION OF INTERCULTURAL SPACE

Currently developing civilization of networks with its global character becomes an increasingly stronger mechanism for the popularization of cultural values while it builds multicultural societies on one side, and societies that remain isolated from cultural differences on the other. With a world without borders and no barriers to human mobility, there is a growing need to understand not only multicultural space but, more importantly, intercultural one (in which there is a coexistence and dialogue of cultures). It neither includes comparing or confronting different cultures, nor involves the act of inspiring meetings and mutual exchange of experience because in the virtual space all this takes place constantly. The significance lies in broadening the knowledge of the

nature of these contacts and in transforming this nature from observant to understanding; from unreflective to consciously involved; and finally from polemical to dialogical.

In recent years, the scientific debate focused on the appearance of multiculturalism in traditional space. The time of Giddens's "macro-level change" introduces a new virtual dimension of human presence and strongly encourages individuals to reflect on the processes of cultural mixing in virtual reality. Moreover, formerly spontaneous intercultural relations should also be reflected upon.

The ease with which Internet users establish intercultural contacts is incredible; one could even ask if any intercultural education is needed if participation in different cultures in this environment has a voluntary and natural character. The answer however is only seemingly obvious. Even though nowadays the interactions of different cultures are increasingly frequent, it does not mean that difference and diversity ceased to give rise to misunderstanding and conflicts. The world has become a global village but its implications are mainly visible in business, media and economy. Across different cultures people wear similar clothing, listen to the same music, study at the same universities, have common symbols, contact via Facebook and prefer the Internet to books. However, situations of particular importance trigger deep-seated social reactions. The acquired ability of intercultural communication loses its significance in favour of initial behaviours and influences.

It can be seen that the expansion of modern space with the virtual dimension has resulted in experiencing new forms of understanding intercultural relations but also in a possibility of appreciating the information culture. The link between these elements results from a simple relationship of the terms "communication" and "information." The communication process always involves information transmission, and at the same time information requires the communication process to exist. A new approach to the intercultural space with intercultural communication that arises there requires a redefinition and intensification of understanding of the information culture with an increased awareness of the very concept of culture and the culture of digital literacy (CASTELLS 2003). The challenges that both modern and information civilizations face require reflection that surpasses current understanding of the technocratic and technological understanding of its infrastructure. It becomes necessary to understand the origins, motivations, goals and purposes of human actions in relation to the acquisition and use of information as actions to which specific meanings and values are attached. In the era of constant intercultural interactions and occasional clashes, strategic planning of organization development, educational programs, careers and various models of social interaction, when broadening the knowledge of people and the world one should not ignore questions about the intentions or the models of cultural evaluation and skills development. The necessity of such careful consideration is noticeable in the significant increase in the role of information which has become one of the most cherished values of modern civilization; a value that often reveals the tendency to eliminate its original functions, depart from them and act against man. Many examples of information and cultural confusion show that individuals are still not thoroughly prepared to effectively respond to challenges posed by overproduction, media overload

and, finally, by the information chaos. In fact, there are numerous occurrences of poorly analysed, processed, understood or interpreted information. Essentially there is a great demand for information anthropology that would approach in a holistic manner the relationship between man and the world in the context of both his needs and cognitive values. In the era of advanced technical civilizations which experience the digital revolution, space expansion and virtual interactions, the significance of this type of reflection, research, and abilities developed in the process, together with the aforementioned anthropology, is substantially increasing (BATORSKI/MARODY/NOWAK 2006).

Among the reasons behind the growing interest in the field of the information culture in the multicultural space are the following:

- introduction of new electronic communication systems in the global network that construct the virtual space, along with the development of a new multicultural space;
- the necessity of developing new forms of information literacy that would allow participation in many cultural spaces that combine real and virtual elements;
- the need for acquiring skills that would help to manage information in culturally diverse information systems;
- constant development of increasingly modern, innovative and unconventional perspectives of education due to the development of modern media;
- the need to overcome information dysfunctions in the situation of the multiplicity of overlapping cultures;
- the development of new educational needs in the society of advanced information culture;
- the need for intercultural education that extends its scope beyond the real space;
- intensive processes of information flow in the cross-cultural social systems of transgressive character etc.

Though the term “information culture” is no longer new, it is still not widely used. In the analysis of literature which contains attempts to define the notion of information culture it is indicated that the term is usually associated with one of the information models, for instance teaching information literacy (OLIVER 2004: 287-314), information management (WIDÉN-WULFF 2000: 3; CURRY/MOORE 2003: 91-110), the culture of organization (CURRY/MOORE 2003: 91-110; MARTIN/LYCETT/MACREDIE 2003) etc. Despite the increasingly evident shift from the needs related to operating information technology to the necessity of using it to directly process information, the notion of information culture is still only limited to technological aspects. In the definitions that appear in the scientific literature it is easy to notice the practice of simplifying the description of information culture and merely reducing it to the technical and instrumental perspective. While such a simplification facilitates the process of understanding the concept, it also narrows the meaning and significance of the term. Probably this act of reduction is directly linked to the aforementioned understanding of the information society, the definition of which has also evolved from a society characterised by the use of information technology to a society distinguished by a high level of information intensity.

A number of earlier attempts to define “information culture” can be found in Polish literature, especially in the works of Tadeusz Furmanek and Tadeusz Piątek who define it as:

- 1) “a range of generally stable dispositions to assess information technologies and create emotional responses, and fixed beliefs about the nature and characteristics of these technologies leading to certain behaviours towards information technologies” (FURMANEK 2002: 64),⁵
- 2) “the way of life of a particular community, the system of developed behaviour patterns; overall human achievement which is the result of the use of broadly defined information technology.” (PIĄTEK 2003: 282)

The abovementioned definitions demonstrate a strong link between the understanding of the concept of “information culture” and its technological aspect. They focus on the analysis of developed behaviour patterns of its representatives towards information and communication technologies. The omitted aspect of knowledge, abilities and attitudes towards the role of information and limiting it merely to information technologies identifies the term described here with the concept of the culture of digital literacy. However, it is important to distinguish between information skills and digital competence; proficiency in the use of information from the proficiency to use information and communication technologies; information efficiency from technical literacy; information awareness from digital literacy; or finally information skills from digital skills, while ignoring that all these categories are deeply involved in different types of symbolic culture and information itself is seen in the context of various systems of meanings and values without which it remains unnoticed even in its instrumental function.

Modern understanding of information culture must reach beyond the boundaries of technocentrism and technological determinism and embrace all aspects of the development of information society. Therefore, information culture can be understood at multiple levels in relation to various interrelated dimensions i.e. information, communication, cultural and intercultural competencies that create a culture of open information flow and build culturally-shaped systems of norms and information standards (KORPOROWICZ 2011). Interdependencies may generate an attitude of more integrated and reflexive understanding of information culture, definition of which would go beyond technical solutions and at the same time would explain its dynamics and evolution. In this context the definition of the concept of information culture could take the following form:

Information culture is an open system that involves, on the one hand, the knowledge, skills and attitudes of information users which is formed through social experiences, and on the other it contains their products that are a result of participation in the information process.

It is therefore a culture of:

- 1) participation – in structures, resources, processes and changes. The conditions and scope of this participation determines the degree of what can be described

⁵ Translation – Z.S.

as openness. The participation itself becomes the supreme value, postulate and purpose of social development as a constitutive value of individual and social development. It is assumed that this participation has a developmental character and does not involve any degradation of personality, relationships or social structures; however, there is an increasing need to carefully observe such processes.

- 2) various transgressions – therefore it overcomes many existing borders in a great number of fields and aspects. The central issues for the theme of this paper include cultural, mental and spatial transgressions, which in the era of latest information and communication technologies is becoming increasingly possible or even progressive. As in the case of the previously analysed characteristic, these transgressions can lead to many different results and presently there is a much higher awareness of the relativity of their evaluation.
- 3) communication – modern information culture cannot be the culture of participation or transgression without strongly developed means and forms of communication (interpersonal, cultural, intercultural and that which today is developed through electronic communication and is rapidly advancing network of communications and transmissions. The development of social communication processes becomes an inherent feature of modern information culture, as well as of culture in a general sense, making them progressively interdependent or even define one through the other.

Not only elements in the virtual space are experienced in distinct ways, but also the activities that take place there require redefinition in order to use them to analyse the rapid pace of changes that occur in the modern type of participation in culture. The necessity of such redefinition is also necessary due to the modern dynamics of social and cultural change and related technologies. With reference to the above analysis of information arises a need to modify the understanding of information competency, a concept closely linked to information culture. Accordingly, the recognition of information competency as stable structures, i.e. the skills of searching, evaluating and analysing information which allow individuals to adjust their actions to the conditions set by the changing environment is becoming less needed. This transformation heads towards competencies that are understood processively, with the recognition of the transgressive potential of the subject, assuming that types of activities generated by an individual and associated with searching, storing, organizing, processing and implementing information are prone to creative modification that occurs as a consequence of dynamic changes of the environment and human personal development.

CONCLUSION

The nature of modern intercultural processes changes with the progressive transformation and globalization, but also with the modernization of possible means of communication. The Internet, the fifth dimension of modern human presence amply fulfils

human aspirations of going beyond the boundaries of one's own culture; therefore, it indirectly shapes the abilities of existing and functioning on the cultural (intellectual, psychological, social, political etc.) borderlands. On the one hand, technology allows people to travel, move between countries, visit places that are hard to access or communicate with people that are thousands of kilometres away; on the other, it has reduced communication to an electronic process of transmitting information. Therefore, the Internet is simultaneously a tool of liberation and limitation. Great haste and anonymity offered by the virtual space impoverish communication by introducing nonverbal language, reducing direct contact, decreasing closeness and leading to superficiality and brevity of relationships. Intercultural contact is constantly established, although often unconsciously. The Internet is a world in which someone must finally intervene to show how to wisely use the cultural richness it offers, and appreciate the interpenetration of cultures but also their mutual exclusion. There is a necessity of deepening the respect for others and for oneself, developing mutual understanding for one another, establishing mutual interactions, highlighting the importance of diversity and adopting an attitude of tolerance and mutual appreciation in the fifth dimension. Only this kind of complex and multidimensional approach that is not only limited to the understanding of reality but it actually changes it, can face the challenges of modern civilization, including a global network civilization. They require a reflexion that goes beyond the technocratic and technological question of how the modern intercultural communication develops. In the new multicultural space it is necessary to understand the origins, motivations, goals and purposes of human actions, including the use of interpersonal contacts and incorporating them into active communication processes in which they can become a subject of dialogue and moderation, interpretation and inspiration.

The newly created need for understanding multicultural space generated a necessity of a different view of information culture. One of the main challenges that modern man faces is the desire to increase the flexibility of his presence; consequently, it involves finding and limiting those factors that block the ability to easily adjust to a new environment. This flexibility must directly relate to the dynamisms of modern information culture which exceeds the barriers of stability, durability and predictability. This change in the understanding of information culture is interlinked with the change in the role that information plays in everyday human life, as it is becoming increasingly significant in the process of supporting its development. It is important however, not to ignore the fact that the interpretation of information depends on the cultural context. Modern space of human presence has brought various cultures closer together, but at the same time it increased their diversity and variability in time, hence the lack of uniformity in the reception and analysis of information. The consequence of this diversity is the difficulty in establishing a single model of culture and information competency which also changed their status by undergoing a transformation from static models to dynamic, transgressive ones.

Translated by Zuzanna Sławik

REFERENCES

- BATORSKI, Dominik; MARODY, Mirosława; NOWAK, Andrzej (ed.) 2006: *Spoleczna przestrzeń Internetu*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkoły Wyższej Psychologii Społecznej "Academica."
- CASTELLS, Manuel 2003: *Galaktyka Internetu. Refleksje nad Internetem, biznesem i społeczeństwem*. (Nowe Horyzonty.) Transl. by Tomasz Hornowski. Poznań: Rebis.
- CURRY, Adrienne; MOORE, Caroline 2003: "Assessing Information Culture – An Exploratory Model," *International Journal of Information Management* 23(2): 91-110.
- DIJK, Jan van 2006: *The Network Society*. London: Sage.
- FURMANEK, Waldemar 2002: "Kultura techniczna i kultura informacyjna. Eksplikacja pojęcia. Konsekwencje metodologiczne," in: Janusz Morbitzer (ed.): *Techniki komputerowe w przekazie edukacyjnym. XII Ogólnopolskie Sympozjum Naukowe, Kraków 27-28 września 2002*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe AP.
- GOBAN-KLAS, Tomasz 2004: "Ontologia Internetu," in: Lesław H. Haber (ed.): *Spółczesność informacyjna. Wizja czy rzeczywistość? II ogólnopolska konferencja naukowa. Vol. 2*. Kraków: Uczelniane Wydawnictwo Naukowo-Dydaktyczne AGH.
- JASKUŁA, Sylwia 2011(a): "Przestrzeń informacyjna jako przestrzeń edukacyjna," in: Agata Cudowska (ed.): *Kierunki rozwoju edukacji w zmieniającej się przestrzeni społecznej. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana profesorowi habilitowanemu Michałowi Balickiemu*. Białystok: Trans Humana. Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie.
- JASKUŁA, Sylwia 2011(b): "Intercultural Space. Contemporary Challenges and Perspectives," in: Saad Abudayeh, Krzysztof Bojko (eds.): *Poland – Jordan – European Union: Future Aspects. Conference, December 15, 2010*. Amman: The University of Jordan.
- JASKUŁA, Sylwia 2011(c): "Informacyjna przestrzeń tożsamości," in: Justyna Szulich-Kałuża, Leon Dyczewski, Robert Szwed (eds.): *Tożsamość i komunikacja*. (Tożsamość Osób, Zbiorowości, Instytucji.) Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.
- KAKU, Michio 2011: *Hiperprzestrzeń. Wszechświaty równoległe, pętle czasowe i dziesiąty wymiar*. Trans. by Ewa L. Łokas, Bogumił Bieniok. Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka.
- KORPOROWICZ, Leszek 2011: "Tożsamość kulturowa w przestrzeni międzykulturowej," in: Idem (ed.): *Socjologia kulturowa. Kontynuacje i poszukiwania*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo UJ.
- KOZIELECKI, Józef 2004: *Spółczesność transgresyjna. Szansa i ryzyko*. Warszawa: "Żak."
- KRZYSZTOFEK, Kazimierz; SZCZEPAŃSKI, Marek S. 2002: *Zrozumieć rozwój. Od społeczeństw tradycyjnych do informacyjnych. Podręcznik socjologii rozwoju społecznego dla studentów socjologii, nauk politycznych i ekonomii*. (Podręczniki i Skrypty UŚ w Katowicach. 1.) Katowice: Wydawnictwo UŚ.
- LEVINSON, Paul 2006: *Miękkie ostrze, czyli historia i przyszłość rewolucji informacyjnej*. (Spectrum.) Transl. by Hanna Jankowska. Warszawa: Muza.
- LUHMANN, Niklas 2000: *Art as a Social System*. (Meridian.) Transl. by Eva M. Knodt. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- MARTIN, Valerie A.; LYCETT, Mark; MACREDIE, Robert 2003: *Exploring the Gap between Business and IT: An Information Culture Approach*. Paper presented at the ALOIS Con-

- ference in 2003, Linköping, Sweden, 12-13 March. Available under <<http://www.vits.org/konferenser/alouis2003/html/6895.pdf>>.
- MAY, Christopher 2002: *The Information Society. A Sceptical View*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- OLIVER, Gillian 2004: "Investigating Information Culture: A Comparative Case Study Research Design and Methods," *Archival Science* 4(3): 287-314. DOI: 10.1007/s10502-005-2596-6.
- PAGELS, Heinz 1985, *Perfect Symmetry, The Search for the Beginning of Time*, Nowy Jork: Bantam
- PIĄTEK, Tadeusz 2003: "Potrzeba badań kultury informacyjnej," in: Waldemar Furmanek, Wojciech Walat (eds.): *Teoretyczne i praktyczne problemy edukacji technicznej i informatycznej*. Rzeszów: Uniwersytet Rzeszowski.
- SIMMEL, Georg 2008: „Socjologia przestrzeni” Transl. by Małgorzata Łukasiewicz, in: Georg Simmel *Pisma socjologiczne*, Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa
- TRUSZKOWSKA-WOJTKOWIAK, Maria; WOJTKOWIAK, Jerzy 2008: *Spółeczeństwo informacyjne. Pytania o tożsamość, wiedzę i edukację*. Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego.
- VIERKANDT, Alfred 1928: *Gesellschaftslehre*, Stuttgart: F. Enke, [quoted in:] Jerzy Mikułowski-Pomorski 2006: "Fragmentaryzacja jako proces ponowoczesny. Rekompozycja poprzez fragmentaryzację," *Euro-limes – czasopismo internetowe* 1(6).
- WIDÉN-WULFE, Gunilla 2000: "Business Information Culture: A Qualitative Study of the Information Culture in the Finnish Insurance Business," *Information Research* 5(3).

Sylvia JASKUŁA, Ph.D., is the author of many articles about information culture and space, transformations in education, developmental evaluation, information and knowledge society, intercultural and information competences, and intercultural cooperation. Animator of comparative research on cultural and educational aspects of the modern "conceptual" society. She is a leading expert in the field of evaluation strategies and training programmes in education for social transformation, communication and innovation.