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## **Polish cyber activism: protection of human rights and antiwar themes in the Internet**

### **ABSTRACT**

The article analyses the cyberactivism (activism online), which is politically motivated movements using internet technologies in their actions. Referring to international online activism, the author focuses on Polish cyberactivism and studies three Polish websites as places where Polish cyberactivists take (or organize) their actions.

The author analyses online activities of particular various organizations and initiatives working within the human rights and anti-war movement: the article studies the website of large and well-organized structure like Amnesty International Poland; the website of local semi-formal Anti-War Coalition from Poznań; as well as large, expanded website mainly about Iraq conflict (Irak.pl).

**KEY WORDS:** cyberactivism, internet, social movements, globalization, human rights, anti-globalization movement, pacifism

Activists have always been quick to incorporate into their activities the newest technologies<sup>1</sup>. They have done so with the digital media as well, in a natural and effective way. Thanks to the Internet, activists (also entire social movements) can communicate, mobilize themselves and organize various actions. Some of such activity has been done extremely effectively, due to digital media possibilities. For example, the Zapatista activists or the Coalition to Free Burma successes have largely been due to cyberactivists, or activists using the Internet. The Internet today functions not just as a medium but as an environment (a virtual world) where activists and social movements, often in opposition to authorities or business hierarchies, can function. It is a complex and imperative process of which Polish activism is part, therefore it is relevant to research it.

The subject of this article is an analysis of Polish cyberactivism through researching websites on human rights and anti-war themes. Three sites will be focused on, those of Amnesty International Poland, Pozan Anti-War Coalition and Irak.pl. These are places where Polish cyberactivists organize and carry out their activities. The analysis will focus on their online activity (raising awareness, mobilization, organization) and the relations that take place between the virtual (online) and the real world (offline).

### **Cyberactivism: social movements, the Internet and networks**

Cyberactivism, as defined by Sandor Vergh, is a politically motivated movement active through the Internet<sup>2</sup>. Activists *support* their doings by Internet technologies or *carry out* their activities through these. In the first case, the Internet aids traditional techniques and acts as an additional channel of communication, for example to increase range of action or to coordinate it better. In the second case, it is solely online activity, such as hacking<sup>3</sup>. In this contest, the Internet is an indispensable tool.

Firstly, Internet communication is potentially democratising. K. Jakubowicz lists the characteristics of digital communication such as interactivity, exchangeability of broadcaster and receiver, synchronicity of communication, 'pull' technology (omnipresent accessibility),

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. McCaughey M., Ayers M.D. [2003], *Introduction* [in:] McCaughey M., Ayers M.D. (ed.), *Cyberactivism. Online Activism in Theory and Practice*, Routledge, New York & London, p. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> Vegh P. [2003], *Classyfying Forms of Online Activism. The Case of Cyberprotests against the World Bank*, [in:] *Cyberactivism...*, p. 71.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 72.

portability of terminals and disintermediation (elimination of intermediaries)<sup>4</sup>. There is also the speed of communication, low costs, ease of information generation and dissemination, decentralisation of communication structures and open protocols which are very functional from the social movement point of view. Hence, Goban-Klas defines digital media as 'opposition media'<sup>5</sup>.

Secondly, the Internet is not just a technology or a tool of communication but a material infrastructure for a specific organization form – the Web<sup>6</sup>. This form of organization fits activism well, the Internet is a network, also a social one. The same is with protests, they are also networks of people acting together, sharing common values, interests, fears. The Internet is imperative, not just because it provides space for alternative, independent flow of information, but also because it shapes the structure of communication, a multi-way, cooperative activity<sup>7</sup>.

The Internet enables social movements organization, coordination and communication. It supports their elasticity and member potential, due to its decentralised and democratic character, it is a natural environment for organizations and movements in opposition to traditional, official hierarchies<sup>8</sup>. Agnieszka Rothert sees the Internet as an environment for global networks of opposition/change. She uses the term counterWeb, or an alternative web, an open structure for exchange of information, a dispersed network of people's activity<sup>9</sup>.

Similarly, according to Castells, the Internet is a natural environment for the functioning of social movements in the information era, or social movements created within forming societies on the Internet. The Web is indispensable because, firstly, these movements are centered around specific culture values, in defence of which activists (organizations, individuals) mobilize themselves, all the more often, through the Web. Secondly, these are loose, informal coalitions which are often created spontaneously as the Internet enables communication and systematic coordination of activities. Thirdly, these are movements with a specific range of activity, on the one hand they are deeply rooted in local communities, on the other, through symbolic actions and international coordination of activity, they can have global reach<sup>10</sup>.

In this work, used will be Vergh's classification of cyberactivism who divided it into three types of activity: 1) one geared toward raising *awareness* and for *advocacy*, 2) *organization/mobilization* activity; 3) various direct Internet activity, especially hacker, (*action/reaction*)<sup>11</sup>. This classification was adopted because it is clear and straightforward, with a focus on advancing progress of cyberactive activity, from simple distribution of information, through coordination, mobilization of activity to direct action in cyberspace<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Jakubowicz K. [2004], *Demokracja komunikacyjna: (nieskończona) ewolucja pojęcia*, „Studia Medioznawcze”, nr 3, p. 23-24. Jakubowicz outlines three anti-democratic elements: individualisation/personalisation of communication, neo-intermediation (new intermediaries choosing/offering information), creation of new forms of payment; cf. ibidem.

<sup>5</sup> Goban-Klas T. [2001], *Opozycja w cyberprzestrzeni*, [in:] Łabędź K., Mikołajczyk M. (ed.), *Opozycja w systemach demokratycznych i niedemokratycznych*, AP w Krakowie, Kraków, p. 29-31.

<sup>6</sup> Castells M. [2003], *Galaktyka Internetu. Refleksje nad Internetem, biznesem i społeczeństwem*, REBIS, Poznań, p. 159.

<sup>7</sup> Salter L. [2003], *Democracy, New Social Movements, and the Internet*, [in:] *Cyberactivism...*, p. 127; Routledge P. [2000], 'Our resistance will be as transnational as capital': *Convergence space and strategy in globalising resistance*, „GeoJournal”, nr 52, p. 27-28.

<sup>8</sup> Rothert A. [2003], *Technopolis. Wirtualne sieci polityczne*, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, Warszawa, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Tamże, p. 16, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Castells, p. 159-163; According to R. Cohen and P. M. Rai, there are six types of movements – human rights, feminist, ecologic, trade union, religious and pacifist., cf. Castells, p. 163.

<sup>11</sup> Vegh, p. 72.

<sup>12</sup> The definition of cyberactivism also includes information activity though the new media, which is the basis and starting point of activity.

Internet character makes it an alternative use of information and news (first type), alternative from the point of view of new social movements, independent of 'official' media. Cyberactivists use Internet to distribute content which is less present in traditional media. Such activity has become fundamental among activists in non-democratic countries but also democratic ones, there the Internet functions as a democratised (in terms of production and reception), quick and fairly inexpensive communication channel. What is more, it enables people to conduct information activity without limiting them to solely inserting text and graphic materials. Hypermediality and interactivity of new media make it a tool with great potential in terms of provoking interest among recipients. Aside from the above mentioned, cyberactivist activity has one more very significant characteristic, aside from information materials, it incites people to immediate reaction. This way, the Internet often speeds up activism, from reading the news on an issue to concrete activity one only needs to do a few clicks with a mouse.

This way transfer to the second type of cyberactive activity takes place, one step further than awareness and support, that of mobilization and organization. Vegh, divides activity into offline- simple actions such as inserting on WWW sites and into e-mails information about activities taking place, and online – attempts to make people sign petitions, on paper or in electronic form<sup>13</sup>.

The third type of cyberactivism is hactivism (or hacker activity carried out by activists). Based on Vegh's classification, through an analysis of three Polish sites, I will attempt to answer the question as to how Polish activists use the Internet. Also of interest will be 1) what type of activity is carried out, 2) to what extent they use the potential of the new medium, 3) are there any differences in the way different organizations and people (on the global and local level) use the same tools. In this analysis, I will not focus on hacker activity, as it is not carried out on these sites<sup>14</sup>.

### **Object of analysis**

It needs to be stressed that it is not organizations but their websites which are the object of the analysis, those of Amnesty International Poland, the Poznan Anti-War Coalition and the Irak.pl. Analysed will be their content and form as well as activities carried out. The choice of these websites was not random but tied to the research questions outlined above. It will show the differences between the sites, their functioning, and the methods of activity through the World Wide Web.

Polish section of Amnesty International ([www.amnesty.org.pl](http://www.amnesty.org.pl)) is a branch of the world's largest (over 1.8 mln members) organization protecting human rights. Amnesty International (AI) exists since 1961 and its main goals are to free those wrongfully imprisoned, to ensure political prisoners fair trials, to put an end to capital punishment and torturing as well as people going 'missing' and being executed without trial. AI is a pacifist organization which carries out its goals through peaceful civil activity, by writing letters to governing authorities of countries breaching human rights, by public dissemination of information of such breaches (media campaigns, reports, etc ), by financial and legal aid to those in need<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Vegh also included in his category calls for activity possible only online, such as hactivism, pointing out that this is an indirect activity which fits into the third group of cyber activity – action/reaction; cf. Vegh, p. 74-75; to this I would add one more element – that of seeking new members and funds.

<sup>14</sup> For more on hactivism cf. Vegh, p. 75-84; Rothert A. [2005], *Cybernetyczny porządek polityczny*, INP UW, Warszawa, p. 114-124; Castells, p. 180-187; Rothert [2003], p. 62-65, 82-86.

<sup>15</sup> Amnesty International official website: [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org).



Photograph 1. AI Poland website

The Poznan Anti-War Coalition organization (PKA - [www.pka.most.org.pl](http://www.pka.most.org.pl)) is of different character. It embraces several dozen members of different backgrounds who are involved in various anarchist, pacifist or freedom movements. PKA defines its activities as, “domestic anti-mandatory military draft, against anti-terrorist activity and anti genocide in Chechnya”<sup>16</sup>. The website includes anti-war journalism (several dozen texts on the conflict in Iraq, the issue of US bases in Poland and the war in Chechnya), a collection of documents (PKA and Free Caucasus Committee statements), reports from local actions (“Food instead of bombs”, demonstrations, marches) as well as from trials of PKA members and an advice section “Draft STOP!”.

<sup>16</sup> URL: <http://www.pka.most.org.pl/historia.htm> (December 15, 2006).



Photograph 2. Poznan Anti-War Coalition

The third website, [www.irak.pl](http://www.irak.pl), is devoted to an anti-war theme, with a focus on the Iraq conflict. This site is considerably larger than the other two, including variable content and quality. It is connected to the STOP War Initiative, with an “About us” section, “on people of various world views such as the Iraqis in Poland Association, Labour Democracy, Youth Labour Union Federation, portal Arabia.pl, Green Federation, Amnesty International as well as many other people of good will not belonging to any political or humanitarian organization, of all religious beliefs or without, for whom the truth, human rights and law-abidingness are not empty words”<sup>17</sup>. The website is comprised of several large subsections including “Iraq War Balance” statistics, “Iraq Underground” analyses and essays, and “American Terrorism, Al-Quaida alleged Terrorism”, “Napalm and torture in service to democracy”, “Colonialism Observed and corporate neofascism” or “Oil Crusades. Church in face of wars and political conflicts”<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> URL: <http://www.irak.pl/Stop/My.html> (December 15, 2006); Irak.pl creators cooperate with the STOP War Initiative, take part in actions and inform about it on their site. Official site of the Initiative is [www.isw.w.pl](http://www.isw.w.pl) (similar in structure and content to PKA).

<sup>18</sup> Within the Irak.pl site there is a parallel site (in terms of layout and structure) on the alterglobalist movement.



Photograph 3. Irak.pl website (its top part only).

The three web sites are only selected examples among many other anti-war or protection of human rights sites in Poland<sup>19</sup>, however, these three are diverse enough, in terms of content, in order to answer our questions. On the one hand, they differ from each other significantly. There is a domestic branch of a large world wide organization, one which encompasses actions of local people and one with a great variety of information. Despite the great diversity, they have on common denominator, they all deal with related issues (a result of specific values shared among the people).

### Information activity: raising awareness, expressing advocacy

The first, basic type of cyber activity is raising people's awareness and expressing advocacy through digital media.

This is what Amnesty International does through its website. Reliable, credible data easily accessible to those interested, activists, spokespeople or scientists, is the "core of the activity"<sup>20</sup>. The Internet has certainly greatly aided the process of production and dissemination of information through re-organization and re-defining of the target group for AI activity. Aside from indirectly influencing public opinion (through members and media), the organization can now act more directly, via "public education in the virtual world"<sup>21</sup>. Its website includes information, reports, eye witness accounts and documents on breaches of human rights all over the world (general statistics as well as individual cases). Everything is supported with a network of links and a search engine.

<sup>19</sup> Other sites are: Free Caucasus Committee ([www.kwk.booo.pl](http://www.kwk.booo.pl)) or Rozbrat ([www.rozbrat.org](http://www.rozbrat.org)).

<sup>20</sup> Lebert J. [2003], *Writing Human Rights Activism*, [in:] *Cyberactivism...*, p. 210.

<sup>21</sup> A better statement would be "education through virtual world"; cf. Lebert, p. 219-222.

While it is relatively easy for AI to raise awareness of their target people (information generally of high interest)<sup>22</sup>, the situation is not the same regarding the Poznan Anti-War Coalition which acts on an entirely different scale. This organization is strictly local in its scope. The PKA website includes two types of texts: 1) reports from local PKA actions and trials of its members; 2) texts with anti-war themes and anti-military draft<sup>23</sup>. According to the creators, it is the anti-draft advice which attracts most interest: 35% of entries (up to 45% during draft season, spring and autumn)<sup>24</sup>.

The Irak.pl site includes information not just on the Iraq conflict but other related, general political, economic and social issues from the pacifist and alter globalist point of view. It is difficult to make generalizations about this website as it includes a variety of cyberactivism in its various shapes, forms and content. In contrast to the AI site, this one to a lesser degree intends to create interest of official media with its materials. Its goal is not to complement the media world view (as AI and PKA do) but rather to negate it. It is in opposition to commercial media, an alternative source of most complete information on world politics, without lies and with extensive commentary.

For these two reasons, the Irak.pl website is a specific one. The materials included on the site are of great diversity in terms of form, content and quality. Their only common denominator is their anti-war theme. For example, there are essays by Harold Pinter or Jacques Derridy but also ones by Naomi Klein and Michael Moore. There are John Paul II anti-war statements but also ones entitled “Polish Pope and the cult of death” or “Ratzinger’s Nazi past”. Secondly, the Irak.pl site includes materials and opinions considered extreme by traditional media. They are radical in terms of language used (controversial statements) and insinuations made (“Al-Quaida alleged terrorism”, “corporate colonialism and neofascism”, “oil crusades”) but also in terms of content and assessment (“Zbigniew Brzeziński creator of Al-Quaida”), and conspiracy theories (“ISI, CIA and MI6 agents organized the New York, London and Madrid terrorist attacks”, “(...) the WTC attack was a covert action of American secret services”, “US Marines; bombs in Iraq are set of also by Mossad”).

It should also be noted that the Irak.pl website is the Polish version of Indymedia (pl.indymedia.org) or *Independent Media Center*, a volunteer journalist organization<sup>25</sup>. A large number of materials on the Irak.pl comes from Indymedia, if one clicks on the headline, he will be transferred to the pl.indymedia.org site where the information was originally placed, with a lead being included on Irak.pl<sup>26</sup>.

The PKA activists use the least of the hypermedia Internet potential. The only other than reading texts function on the webpage is that to download anti-war graphics, a leaflet stencil and an anti-draft advice booklet. The AI website, on the other hand, takes full advantage of hypermedia potential, it includes film and audio materials (reports, etc) as well as, according to Joanne Lebert (Canadian sociologist and AI activist), “relatively inexpensive and user friendly interactive applications”<sup>27</sup>. An example of such is the available online computer game *March Against Domestic Violence*, in support of women’s rights and the campaign, which is a street demonstration and activity to gain new supporters. The game

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<sup>22</sup> P. Vegh states that a form of cyber information activity is also lobbying through electronic media. There are three target groups: government authorities, world public opinion (including the media) and governments of non-democratic countries (successful campaign *Free Burma Coalition*); see. Vegh, p. 74.

<sup>23</sup> “Draft STOP!” section includes advice on how to avoid draft, journalism, documents, statements and legal acts regarding military draft; URL: [http://www.pka.most.org.pl/szwejk\\_poradnik.htm](http://www.pka.most.org.pl/szwejk_poradnik.htm) (December 15, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Journalism is in second place (20% of entries), in third - documents (15%); source: e-mail from the site author (21.03.2007).

<sup>25</sup> See. Kidd D. [2003], *Indymedia.org. A New Communications Commons*, [in:] *Cyberactivism...*, p. 47-69.

<sup>26</sup> Some materials on the Irak.pl site we can also find on Rother (anti-war, alterglobalist) English and other language sites.

<sup>27</sup> Lebert, p. 222.



successfully combines interactivity (using W. Godzic's phrase)<sup>28</sup>, raising awareness functions and pop stars' support. During the game, every once in a while there is statistical information of domestic violence and as bonus for effective playing one gets music videoclips by bands supporting AI (ie. The Cure).

The Irak.pl webpage does not have games but it does include several dozen other multimedia materials: films (documents, reports), audio files (reports, interviews, fragments of radio programmes) and photographs (victims, tortured people, devastated cities, coffins of American soldiers). Most of these are very drastic, much different from the ones we are used to seeing which are re-touched and of good technical quality. As A. Leszczyński pointed out, "they are seemingly pictures of suffering but treat it is a subject of an aesthetic game"<sup>29</sup>. The photos on Irak.pl are formally not good, coarse pictures but a lot more direct in depicting the tragedies of individual people. It is a deliberate effort to create and sharpen people's consciousness of certain values, through visualising and to incite outrage against breaching norms<sup>30</sup>.

### Organization and mobilization

The PKA organization and mobilization activities correspond to its local character; they mainly invite people to take part in street action in Poznan such as "Food instead of bombs" (meals for the poor), or "Women in black – women against war (demonstration).

On the AI site you are encouraged to take action either locally (demonstrations and happenings), nationally (petitions), or even globally (international petitions to governments around the world). AI activities are generally supported by a lot of additional information (video files) or background which enable people to become familiar with the situation and convince them to take action. In most cases AI leaves people choice as to how they wish to take action (traditional or electronic mail). In both cases the authors include ready made letters or petitions just to sign and it takes less than a minute to become an activist, without leaving one's home.

Also the Irak.pl webpage includes a long list of links to other sites enabling people to take action in the form of signing petitions or sending e-mails (ie. to close the Guantanamo prison, for G.W. Bush impeachment, or in support of Human Rights Watch). It should be noted, though, that most of the links on the site do not work.

The organization of petitions online, however, can be criticised. Randy Stoecker calls it McActivism, or activism without any deeper engagement aside from the computer screen<sup>31</sup>. At the same time, he admits that this type of activity can be effective. AI reports prove this, the Internet is effective when it comes to Urgent AI activity (quick support for individual people), when it is necessary to immediately act, communicate, coordinate and mobilize a large group of people<sup>32</sup>.

An Internet website can be a good starting point in beginning activity, PKA members are of the opinion that the Internet is often the first form of contact for people starting out as

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<sup>28</sup> Sitarski P. [2002], *Rozmowa z cyfrowym cieniem. Model komunikacyjny rzeczywistości wirtualnej*, Rabid, Kraków, p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> Leszczyński A. [2005], *Prawda i fałsz z fotoszopa*, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, nr 241, p. 13.

<sup>30</sup> Beck U. [2005], *Władza i przeciwwładza w epoce globalnej. Nowa ekonomia polityki światowej*, Wydawnictwo naukowe SCHOLAR, Warszawa, p. 301.

<sup>31</sup> Stoecker R. [2002], *Cyberspace vp. Face to face: Community Organizing in the New Millennium*, "Perspectives on Global Development and Technology", vol. 1 nr 2; URL: <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2000/cyberorganize.htm> (December 15, 2006).

<sup>32</sup> 20% of Urgent Actions in 2000 brought results; Lebert, 214-215. What is interesting, AI initially was against including this type of information of its site and until 2002 only American and Swedish sections of AI included on their sites suggested content of petition and addresses of authorities; see. Lebert, p. 221.



activists<sup>33</sup>. What is more, the PKA site resources (graphic files, statistics, posters, leaflets) are often used by anti-war activists who organize actions in various cities around the country<sup>34</sup>.

Researchers and activists agree, the most successful campaigns are those which combine various methods of activity, on- and offline, and this is becoming increasingly more common<sup>35</sup>. This way we are faced with one of the most fundamental issues - that of social influence of new media and the mutual influence of both realities. In this context we need to re-define activism, in the past one of the key aspects was people's physical presence. Cyberactivism leads us to the question, "where is the body (in cyberspace) which was the core of traditional activism?" (...) We must admit that signing petitions online is much different from chaining to a tree in the old days"<sup>36</sup>. This is imperative as new areas of political conflict are emerging while determinants of political power are shifting closer to the digital world. War is becoming more virtual<sup>37</sup>, and hence, a global 'no' expressed by a global client is gaining importance<sup>38</sup>. At the same time, symbolic action is gaining effectiveness, symbolic meetings of internauts all over the world. (Such meetings are called *meatings*<sup>39</sup> by cyberactivists, alluding to *The body is meat*<sup>40</sup>, from W. Gibson's "Neuromancer" (one of cyberculture fundaments).

The permeation of two worlds, real and virtual, results in a mix of activist range of action. On the one hand, it is local activity, work within people's closest environment (PKA giving out meals at the Poznan station), on the other – global and international activity. An example of such (according to Castell's 'think locally, act globally'<sup>41</sup> idea) is AI's action of writing letters for prisoners around the world through the Internet. Of course, Internet activity is not limited solely to mobilization and recruitment of potential activities. It is also coordination of the organization's functioning, the necessary communication carried out largely through electronic mail. This is fundamental for organizations based on voluntary membership, Lebert recognizes Internet's organizational values for AI organizational functionality (AI Poland website includes a 'internal' section for those who log in), it strengthens cooperation and eliminates the problem of communication between members, it facilitates coordination of global activity on the local level<sup>42</sup>.

At the same time, the network structure continues to develop and grow. Not just between individual activists (ie. the AI and the PKA members generally know each other well) but also between different websites; for example, authors of PKA exchange banners with authors of webpage of similar character<sup>43</sup>, also links from one site often get transferred to other leftist organizations<sup>44</sup>. This means development of a structure of common meanings and values, so important to these types of movements, based on common identities (goals, opponents). It is based on the above that members continue to be involved and active. It is not solely based on the organization's activities and its interaction with the real and virtual worlds but mostly on internal, continuous communication between people<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Source: e-mail from website creator (21.03.2007).

<sup>34</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>35</sup> Vegh, p. 75; Lebert, p. 216-217.

<sup>36</sup> McCaughey, Ayers, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Bendyk E. [2002], *Zatruta studnia. Rzecz o władzy i wolności*, W.A.B., Warszawa, p. 93-112.

<sup>38</sup> Beck, p. 300.

<sup>39</sup> McCaughey, Ayers, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Gibson W. [1999], *Neuromancer*, Zysk i S-ka, Poznań, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> Castells, p. 163.

<sup>42</sup> Lebert, p. 217.

<sup>43</sup> There was no exchange of banners with an "anti-war but also nationalist and xenophobic" website; source: e-mail from website creator (21.03.2007).

<sup>44</sup> Such as [www.lewica.pl](http://www.lewica.pl) or [www.recykling.uni.wroc.pl](http://www.recykling.uni.wroc.pl).

<sup>45</sup> Passy F., Giugni M. [2000], *Life-Spheres, Networks and Sustained Participation in Social Movements: A Phenomenological Approach to Political Commitment*, „Sociological Forum”, vol. 15 No.1, p. 121.

Castells was correct in his thinking that thanks to the Internet these movements can become diversified and more effective. The on-going Internet debate (very necessary) does not paralyze the activity. It is cyberactivist permanent readiness to act that is key and it largely determines their strength, the quick mobilization and coordinated activity when it is necessary.

## Conclusion

Although the discussed above websites greatly differ from each other in some aspects, they have the same goals: to inform, support, raise awareness and to organize and mobilize to activity. They are simply different elements of the same environment which act in order to meet their goals (AI urgent actions, PKA street demonstrations). The other, strategic goal is to maintain the potential of the social networks created through the Internet.

Francois Fortier, when analysing cyber activity, states that it is a result of social activity and not computers because network activism existed long before the Internet and was even more lively and profound than presently<sup>46</sup>. Fortier is correct in his statement that, “computer networks will not democratise policy just because only technology can do that”<sup>47</sup>, and new decentralised communication networks can enforce change in international power structures. There are new actors on the global arena, we are dealing here with an intensive growth of global non-government networks which have to cooperate in order to be effective<sup>48</sup>.

This way, largely due to the Internet, a global network of social movements in cooperation is developing. P. Routledge calls it “convergence sphere”, in which diversified alternative formations are creating a network of communication, solidarity and exchange of information<sup>49</sup>. This type of structure really is developing, also thanks to the functioning of the above mentioned websites. This is not just about a connection of these through links or banners but about the cooperation of people active through these sites.

Castells, when analysing the functioning of modern social movements, stated, „cyberspace has become an electronic agora resounding with a cacophony of social discontent”<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, if these days it is sometimes the potential to act that is more imperative than the actual activity, the discussed above sites are worth examining. All the more so, since we are living in a world where electronic gadgets can be a “tool of power or revolution” and where “power (...) no longer stems from arms but a network of computers connected to the Web”<sup>51</sup>.

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<sup>46</sup> Fortier F. [2001], *Virtuality Check. Power Relations and Alternative Strategies in the Information Society*, Verso, London & New York, s 61.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 81.

<sup>48</sup> Garrido M., Halavais A. [2003], *Mapping Networks of Support for the Zapatista Movement*, [in:] *Cyberactivism...*, p. 167; H. Cleaver diagnoses the phenomenon in a similar way, “new communication technologies transform domestic and international political structure dialogue, undermining traditional equilibrium through the creation of domestic and international policy”; (Cleaver H. [1998], *The Zapatista Effect: The Internet and the Rise of an Alternative Political Fabric*, “The Journal of International Affairs”, 5(2) cited from: Garrido, Halavais, p., 167).

<sup>49</sup> Routledge, p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> M. Castells, p. 158.

<sup>51</sup> E. Bendyk, *Antymatrix*, W.A.B., Warszawa 2004, p. 294.