Polish local governments' media – new enterprises in the modern media landscape

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Abstract

The development of information technology and the high degree of convergence in the Internet force publishers to reinvent customer relationships. New media tools, changing customers behavior (greater consumption of content by mobile devices) need to reorganize channels for published content. The process applies to the commercial media as well as the local government ones. Since introduction of community government laws in Poland after 1989, it has begun the period of democratic and political transformation at the municipal level. It is the beginning of the renaissance of the local media and the media of local governments. The purpose of this paper is to diagnose the underlying problems associated with new media landscape, especially on the Internet. Municipalities, counties, regional governments publish and produce a lot of media titles, websites even TV and radio stations. They distribute content published on traditional channels, but they try to do it in the virtual model of communication, such as interactivity, social media activity or adjusting content to mobile devices. Local governments have editors, journalists and technical background. This paper presents own research results based on observations and surveys.

Keywords: Internet, Poland, local government media, traditional media, new media

Internet and ever-evolving communication technologies provide new possibilities in building media coverage. Networking tools quickly change their forms of communication, which today is based mostly on interactivity. Internet users exercise more and more possibilities given by the fact that the coverage is on the web. It is observed in the manner in which the media are consumed, especially by professional editors – media companies. The communication model "one to many" used in "traditional media" (understood as media which base their coverage on a lack of direct interaction with the recipient – the press, the radio, the television are lacking instant feedback), is not accepted by the Internet users. The network[1] made it possible to create a channel enabling not only to send feedback, but also to become an author, creator of one's own contents. This largely changed the relations between the media and their consumers. Traditional media could not offer their recipients participation in the direct creation of their contents. The Internet provided tools, thanks to which everybody has an opportunity to react to the contents. The web communication largely simplifies taking actions which could influence the published materials, establish direct contact with the authors of the coverage, with the editor. According to S. Allan "the journalists should expect regular, direct contact with the readers' opinions", which leads to "more common perception of the violent change in traditional rules and conventions".[2] Interactivity, as a kind of electronical dialogue and listening to the audience, is necessary. It makes the recipient and the community interested in a given subject engage in creating the coverage. To do it, social networking sites, forums, chatrooms and surveys are needed. It can be described as creating the sort of balance between the sender and the recipient, since the relativity, in the era of interactivity, is becoming bidirectional. This element is becoming the key one in the traditional media consumption, which build their coverage on the Internet. Interactivity is the base of coverage and communication of the "new media", in which "interpersonal communication is joined with mass communication"[3] and defines the new media scenery[4].

It is accompanied with hypertextuality, i.e. coverage based on active links, with the use of which one can be moved to other places – "it is an idea to join objects (not only texts) and moving within and among them like on the principle of branching paths"[5] in cyberspace.

Building communication with an internet user (as a target recipient), must include this nonlinear structure, because it is he or she who decides which "knot" of the web to use and which path to choose (reading, listening or watching)[6] in order to complete the information.

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[1] For stylistic reasons, the text will also refer to the Internet as the network.

[2] S. Allan, S., *Newsy w sieci. Internet i dziennikarstwo*, Kraków 2008, p. 23.

[3] K. Jakubowicz, K., *Nowa ekologia mediów. Konwergencja a metamorfoza*, Warszawa 2011, p. 3.

[4] P. Levinson, P., *Nowe nowe media*, Kraków 2010, pp. 7-15.

[5] K. Wolny-Zmorzyński, A. Kaliszewski, W. Furman, *Gatunki dziennikarskie. Teoria. Praktyka. Język*. Warszawa 2009, p. 122.

[6] M. Lister, J. Dovey, S. Giddings, I. Grant, K. Kelly, *Nowe media. Wprowadzenie*, Kraków 2009, p. 42.

The media must adapt to the new environment, to the user's networking needs. The phenomenon of media convergence (technological and economical) and the repercussions resulting from consumers' access to the wealth of content stored in the global web resources, doubtlessly create new market for producing and consuming content. H. Jenkins defined convergence as a "flow of content between different media platforms, cooperation of different industries and migrational behaviours of media recipients".[7] He presents problems of the media industry. There are many factors determining convergence. However, with the development of new technologies, new elements which change this phenomenon appear. Jenkins stresses the technological aspect ("the flow of content between the platforms"), the concentration of media business ("cooperation of different industries") and the fluctuation of consumers ("migrational behaviours of media recipients").[8]

Press, radio, television and online transmissions are able to infiltrate one another, now more than ever. New web services, technologies – stationary devices and predominantly mobile ones, broaden the range of possibilities, creating the sort of "omnimedium"[9], in which personalisation of coverage is of increasing importance. Every web recipient can be the sender of the content – assume the role of prosumer[10] or pro-ama – when an amateur is difficult to distinguish from a professional.[11] Publishers must adapt to these new roles of media consumers.

New tools of communication are still emerging, and they allow the Internet users to create "socialized" web structures. Internet users were granted the possibility to create user-generated content easily and and to publish it on the Internet instantly (wiki, blogs, social networking sites, etc.). This technology allowed to link the contents together, cooperate in the creation process, share the knowledge with ease and assess them collectively (folksonomy, "collective intelligence"). This led to a dynamic development of the next stage in global communication, which is Web 2.0, identified mainly with internet communities. An important element in the development of Web 2.0 is the possibility to use mobile technologies, which revolutionizes communication. The media, offices and organisations are adopting the tools used by the communities, which has a great impact on creating contents and their distribution.

The changes are not only observed in the "traditional media" (periodicals, newspapers, radio, television) of the commercial editors, who were forced to introduce new channels of distribution and ways of producing content. Also the non-commercial media such as environmental media, local media or the media created by public institutions had to take

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[7] H. Jenkins, *Kultura konwergencji*, Warszawa 2007, p. 9-10.

[8] *Ibidem*.

[9] T. Goban-Klas, *Media i medioznawstwo*, [in:] E. Chudziński (ed.), *Słownik wiedzy o mediach*, Warszawa 2007, p. 11.

[10] A. Toffler, *Trzecia fala*, Warszawa 1997, p. 406.

[11] M. Lister, J. Dovey, S. Giddings, I. Grant, K. Kelly, *op. cit.*, p. 54-55.

the internet challenge. Every publisher who wants to be read, listened to or watched in an interactive way, i.e. enabling instant reaction to a message, undergoes the web evolution.

A large group of editors in Poland consists of local governments (2478 institutions) and their subordinate agencies – of education, culture, sport, social welfare. These institutions not only have their own printed editorials, but also websites, radio and internet stations, television programmes and internet televisions.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The media published and created by the local governments are in the phase of changes and development due to technology changes. The Internet and new communication tools force them to adapt new conditions of functioning. It concerns the organisation of media action in the local governments (who is working in media in the offices), acceptance of legal changes and adjustment to the new manner of consuming "old media" (primarily "paper media") as well as activities in the "new media".

It should be stressed, that the local communities' internet services are a crucial source of information for 41% of the web users.[12] It is also a platform of communication with the government offices and taking care of administration matters. According to Eurostat, 27% of Poles used the internet to interact with public authorities.[13]

Taking the above data and the importance of local government sites for local communication into consideration, the purpose of the survey is to characterize the state of local communities' media development in the changing organisational, legal, social and technological environment. Published analyses and own research were at help.

II. METHODOLOGY

The form of research questionnaire was published on the Internet. The links to the document were sent to 2478 Polish local governments of the towns with district laws, municipalities, urban-rural communes and rural communes (official naming and administrative division). In those local governments the host of the community (mayor, president) and the media trustee are chosen in the direct elections. Because the system of local government in Warsaw is much different, the capital city was not taken into consideration. E-mail addresses found on the Ministry of Administration and Digitalisation[14] internet service were used to conduct the research. The questionnaire was anonymous. The person filling it in could give the details

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[12] K. Dzieniszewska-Naroska, *Skuteczna komunikacja między władzą lokalną a mieszkańcami za pośednictwem internetu*, Warszawa 2012, p. 10.

[13] *Individuals who used the internet for interaction with public authorities*, Eurostat, [online:] http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=isoc_r_gov_i&lang=en.

[14] *Adress database JST*, [online:] https://administracja.mac.gov.pl/adm/baza-jst/baza-teleadresowa-jst-d/7788,Baza-teleadresowa-JST-do-pobrania.html.

identifying the local government (e.g. the title of the publishing company, website address, etc.) and at the same time reserve the right to remain anonymous. From the previous research of the author it can be stated that:

1. local governments answer reluctantly when they must give information which is not anonymous
2. using the mode of response compatible with the Access to Public Information Act results in longer period of collecting data and does not guarantee the high rate of returned questionnaires. This mode can be used by the citizen (also by the researcher) to obtain any kind of information created by the clerk. The office is obliged to respond. In practice, it is shown that the inquiries are often ignored by the local government clerks or the deadlines for responses are not met. Thus, this manner of research was resigned from.

The questionnaire consisted of 75 open, semi-open and close-end questions, grouped in 21 thematic blocks. The presented data is only a part of the collected material. The response rate was 9,5%. This could have been influenced by the detailed version of the questionnaire, the short – one week period of the questionnaire being open and the ongoing election campaign for the governments (the first round took place on 16th November – author's note). The questionnaire research was conducted in October 2014. The web activities of the chosen local governments were observed. Also, a query for the presence of local governments' mobile applications in Google Play services was done.

Local governments' publishing companies, as an element of local media scenery, let the authorities change the information policy. Local government workers received tools to build social relations, but also to communicate with the commune's entourage, its promotion among investors, tourists, etc. Local government media are also a way to present arguments in confrontation with commercial media, often reluctant because they control local authorities, which discuss inconvenient topics.

III. TYPOLOGY OF THE LOCAL MEDIA

In Polish literature we can find a few typologies of local media[15] classified also as sublocal[16] or regionalistic[17]. It is worth to use the definition of M. Gierula[18]: "the subject of local press

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[15] R. Kowalczyk, *Media lokalne w Polsce*, v. I, Poznań 2008, p. 158-174.

[16] S. Dziki, S., W. Chorązki, *Media lokalne i regonalne*, [in:] Z. Bauer, E. Chudziński (eds.), *Dziennikarstwo i świat mediów*, Kraków 2000, p. 21.

[17] W. Chorązki, *Prasa regionalistyczna w okresie transformacji*, [in:] E. Chudziński (ed.), *Regionalizm - lokalizm - media*, Bochnia - Warszawa 2001, p. 121-122.

[18] M. Gierula, *Rola prasy lokalnej w integracji małych miast i wsi (referat)*, [in:] *Prasa lokalna w budowie społeczeństwa obywatelskiego*, Materiały z konferencji zorganizowanej przez Komisję Kultury i Środków Przekazu przy współudziale Izby Wydawców Prasy pod patronatem Marszałka Senatu RP Longina Pastusiaka, 21 września 2004r., Warszawa 2005, p. 21.

is not only the local community as a whole, but also its individual parts, which constitute its social stratification in different dimensions. They can be shaped and unbundled on the basis of interests, needs, professional beliefs, political and ideal memberships, organisational or territorial". Then, "a developed local communication network of different areas and levels of functioning"[19] is born. This definition applies mainly to the local government press but also to the fast developing „new media", whose participants are municipalities, towns, district offices and provincial governments. It is a modern flow of information, which can be formal or informal and created by the office media, clerks or people cooperating with local government authorities. They introduce the process of communication through the Internet forums, social services. In such a way, the inhabitants and guests visiting a commune virtually become the authors of the content. In this context, local government media should be understood as the media created, published and produced by commune offices: urban, rural, urban-rural, district, provincial councils and their subordinate local government institutions – cultural, educational, etc. (not by the communities, local organisations, etc.).

IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-GOVERNMENT MEDIA

The political transformation after 1989 caused structural changes in Poland. One of them was adoption of laws[20] by the parliament: the laws concerning local governments, introducing three-tier division into communes, counties and provincial governments. The period of political transformation was the beginning of local government media renaissance. On the one hand, local authorities got the tool enabling them to shape public opinion. On the other hand, citizens could use their right to the information concerning actions undertaken by mayors, presidents, foremen and marshals. At that time, numerous commercial, local periodicals appeared.

Many local governments have used the new circumstances related to the transformation of the political system. In 1989, nearly 1200 titles of sublocal press were published. 45.5% of them were issued by administrative and local authorities.[21] Jagiellonian University Centre for Press Studies estimated this number at 1000.[22] That is historical data. It is difficult to determine the number of titles today. There have been attempts at doing this, but they were mainly based on data from surveys, often restricted to several voivodships. In order to examine the precise number of local government media, a query of court registers

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[19] *Ibidem*, p. 21.

[20] The Self-Government Act of 8 March 1990 and The Introduction of Basic Three-Level Territorial Division Act of 24 July 1998.

[21] S. Dziki, *Prasa regionalna i lokalna (do roku 1989 roku)*, [in:] *Dziennikarstwo i świat mediów. Nowa edycja*, Z. Bauer, E. Chudziński (eds.), Kraków 2010, p. 216-217.

[22] J. Mianowski, J., *Rola lokalnych mediów w przemianach samorządu*, Stowarzyszenie Prasy Lokalnej [online:] http://prasalokalna.eu/home/o-prasie-lokalnej/229-rola-lokalnych-mediow-w-przemianach-samorzdu.html

is required. According to the Press Law Act of 26 January 1984, the publisher of a title is obliged to submit a registration application, which is not often obeyed.[23] A query of the stocks of the National Library can also be carried out because that is where the issues of magazines should be collected. The titles should be registered in the international information system of continuous publications, run by the National ISSN Centre of the National Library. An example of not neglecting the obligation of registering the title can be the results of the survey of the local government media in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodship. After examining the number of publications on the Internet sites of municipalities and then comparing the date with the information from the National Library, it has been discovered that in 2013, 61 out of 102 local governments in the province had their own registered magazines. On the Internet sites of the local governments only 28 magazines were published regularly according with the stated publishing cycle.[24]

According to own research carried out in 2014, 54.2% of the surveyed local governments claimed that they issued their own magazines, 11.2% of them did not state the frequency of the title. Taking into account the estimates so far, we can talk about the increase in the number of local government magazines to over 1300 over the last 15 years, i.e. by 30%. It must be stressed that the data relates to traditional magazines, i.e. published in paper version.

Proportionately, most of the magazines are published monthly (40.5%), next are those published quarterly (24.1%). The monthly magazines are issued mainly in urban-rural (51% of them) and rural communes (36.1% of them). However, the most popular periodicals in rural communes are those published quarterly, as they constitute 89.2% of all the papers published there. Quarterly magazines are third when considered the frequency of publishing among all kinds of local governments – 24.1% of communes which submitted answers to the survey questions.

The offer of local governments also includes yearly and semi-annual magazines (5.2%), bi-monthly magazines (8.6%), bi-weekly and weekly magazines (7.7%). 2.5% communes defined their titles as occasional (see Table 1).

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[23] K. Kowalik, *Świętokrzyskie media – cyberprzestrzeń nowym wyzwaniem*, "Rocznik Bibliologiczno-Prasoznawczy", v. 6/17, Kielce 2014, p. 181, 185-186.

[24] K. Kowalik, *Świętokrzyskie media – cyberprzestrzeń nowym wyzwaniem*, p. 183.

	Annual	Semi-annual	Quartely	Bi-monthly	Monthly	Bi-weekly	Weekly	Occa-sional
TDR					1	1	2	
UC				1	5	1	1	
URC	1	2	3	1	24	2	1	
RC		3	25	8	17	1		3

Table 1: The number of titles as claimed by the communes that submitted answers to the question on the frequency of the publication. TDR – town with district rights, UC – urban communes, URC – urban-rural communes, RC – rural communes. Source: own research.

Local governments were also asked to quantify the circulation of their magazines. Among the most popular cycles – monthly magazines – the average circulation was 2091 copies (the average did not include the communes which publish occasional papers or those which did not indicate the frequency). However, there was a considerable disproportion in circulation between different kinds of local governments. In towns with district rights the number of printed copies was nearly 10 thousand. The average was underrepresented by rural communes, where the circulation did not exceed 2 thousand copies.

The second most popular – quarterly magazines – reached the highest circulation in urban-rural communes, up to 10 thousand copies. The average for all types of local governments is 1720 copies. However, it was the two-weekly magazines that had the highest average circulation – 6740 copies.

According to the survey, the highest circulation was in towns with district rights. Apart from monthly magazines with the circulation of 10 thousand copies, there were bi-weekly magazines – the highest circulation was 22 thousand, and weekly magazines with the circulation of 33 and 40 thousand copies (see Table 2).

It must be emphasized that all the titles published in towns with district rights were distributed free of charge (as claimed in the survey). In only slightly over a quarter of the communes that submitted answers to the survey questions (26.7%) the magazines were distributed for money. In the particular types of local government these proportions spread in a visible relation – the bigger the commune, the more free of charge titles – 20.6% in rural communes, 24.3% in urban-rural communes, 30% in urban communes and 85.7% in towns with district rights.

Journalism Research Review Quarterly

	Annual	Semi-annual	Quartely	Bi-monthly	Monthly	Bi-weekly	Weekly
TDR					25000	22000	73000
UC			2500	5800	6000	3500	
URC	7000	13000	19000	100	50050	40000	500
RC		3000	28160	14150	19550	1700	

Table 2: The total number of paper circulation as claimed by all communes that submitted answers to the question. TDR – town with district rights, UC – urban communes, URC – urban-rural communes, RC – rural communes. Source: own research.

When the claimed circulation of magazines published by communes (including only those which submitted answers) have been added, it has been discovered that the majority of printed copies are the weekly magazines. Every year readers receive 4,004,000 copies. Monthly magazines have the second highest circulation – 1,204,800 copies, whereas bi-weekly magazines are in the third position. If we sum up all of the indicated circulation numbers (only by the communes participating in the survey – author's notes), the average monthly circulation is 534,428 copies, i.e. over 6,400,000 copies yearly.

It must be stressed that, according to what the communes claim, over three fourths of the titles (78.5%) are distributed free of charge.

Publishing local government magazines requires establishing an editorial office that would be able to deliver the appropriate number of copies for publication. It also requires a team of committed and disciplined employees. According to research, official magazines are based on three groups of people:

1. officials, who create content within their official duties,
2. journalists employed by the office or journalists co-operating with the office,
3. volunteers, i.e. people from outside the office, members of local community.

In all types of local government (towns with district rights, rural, urban-rural and urban communes) the quantitative significance of these two groups of content creators can be observed. Officials creating material prevail in smaller communes: urban-rural (45.9% of communes which claimed to have an editorial office) and rural (42.8%). There are considerably fewer journalists employed by or co-operating with these communes. Only 18.9% of urban-rural and 11.1% of rural self-governments responded that the content for their magazines are created also by journalists. The opposite proportion is true when the results of responses from urban communes are analysed: 23% of officials and 53.8% of journalists, as well as those from towns with district rights: 16,5% and 50% respectively (see Figure 1). The same proportion appears when the contribution of volunteers is taken into account. It may be the result of the way local media are funded – towns had bigger budgets

which they can spend on the media or they see more opportunities for building a message based on professionalisation.
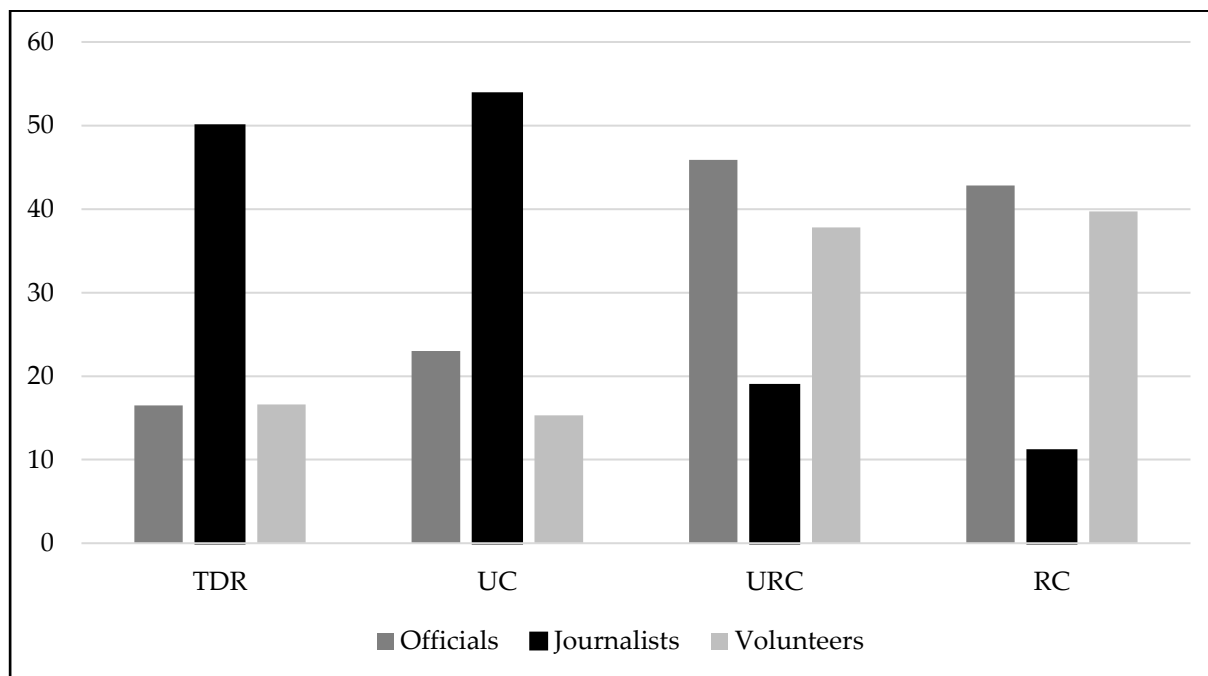

Figure 1: The percentage of communes where officials, journalists and volunteers participate in preparing the content for magazines. TDR – town with district rights, UC – urban communes, URC – urban-rural communes, RC – rural communes. Source: own research.

V. ELECTRONIC MEDIA

A vast majority of communes are the publishers of press titles. They also include local governments which have a license for broadcasting radio and television programmes. According to the register of the National Broadcasting Council, Polish communes have 7 radio stations at their disposal. The licenses are often not assigned directly to the office, but to the subordinate institutions such as community or culture centres.[25] The registers of the National Broadcasting Council also list local governments which are licensees for broadcasting television programmes in telecommunications networks: there 9 communes and 1 county.[26] There are also 7 communes with telecommunications networks but, as is the case with radio

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[25] *Register of licences – Terrestrial Radio Station (Total)*, [online:] http://www.krrit.gov.pl/dla-nadawcow-i-operatorow/koncesje/wykaz-koncesji-i-decyzji/results,1,1,0,0,0,1,0,0.html.

[26] *Register of licences – Telecommunications networks – Television (current)*, [online:] http://www.krrit.gov.pl/dla-nadawcow-i-operatorow/koncesje/wykaz-koncesji-i-decyzji/results,2,2,0,0,1,1,0,0.html.

stations, the licences are assigned to subordinate institutions (community and culture centres).[27]

In the survey, local governments also stated that they establish media distributed on the Internet, but which are not registered. They include online radios and online televisions, which are both difficult to define nowadays. They are mostly programmes created in radio and television stations established in offices and affiliated units. The material is later uploaded to an audio or video streaming server, or to such websites as YouTube. The audio or video material is subsequently linked to specially created websites on the local governments' sites.

Two rural and one urban-rural commune indicated running an online radio. An example of an online radio is the website of the commune of Ząbki. "Radio Ząbki was started by the Municipal Council as an attractive medium serving the inhabitants of the commune. The radio is received in every part of the planet at all times. It is aimed at getting the inhabitants of Ząbki closer to the issues and problems of the town even during holidays or travels to other countries. Radio Ząbki also constitutes a new platform for potential advertisers" – reads the website presenting the history of the radio.[28]

In the survey two towns with district rights, two urban and four urban-rural communes claimed to have an online television. An example of an online television is the website of the Municipal Council of Kielce. The videos are created regularly in the council's press office and are uploaded to the YouTube channel called "Kielce Online TV". The programming declaration reads: "Our aim is to provide quick information about what is happening in Kielce on a daily basis, as well as to enrich the methods and forms of demonstrating the assets of our town."[29] The film promoting the YouTube channel calls the website "the official television of the Municipal Council of Kielce."[30]

VI. INTERNET SERVICES

Nowadays, one of the most important types of local government media is the official website, which should be registered as a traditional journal or periodical, according to the Supreme Court decision.[31] This arouses controversy and poses legal and ethical problems.

In the research done by the author, 7,4% communes declared that they registered websites in court, according to the Press Law Act. However, local governments do not adhere to the regulations. Personal data of the editor in chief and the title should be published on the registered website, and communities fail to do it. Officials, who were employed to create

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[27] *ICT operators and broadcasters. Register extract*, [online:]
https://docs.google.com/viewer?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.krrit.gov.pl%2FData%2FFiles%2F_public%2FPortals%2F0%2FNadawcy%2Fkoncesjonowani%2Frejestr_kab.xls.

[28] *History of the radio*, [online:] http://zabki.pl/index.php?option=18&action=articles_show&art_id=172

[29] "MojeKielce" YouTube channel, [online:] https://www.youtube.com/user/MojeKielce/about.

[30] *Ibidem*, [online:] https://www.youtube.com/user/MojeKielce/featured.

[31] The Supreme Court Decision IV KK 174/07 of 26 July 2007.

the content, gained the rights and duties of journalists. That may lead to conflicts with journalistic principles concerning objectivity of communication and banning e.g. concealment of advertising contents. This can be observed especially during election campaigns, when the materials concerning the local governments are often repeated. The offices explain, that it is a way of promoting the community. However, when the office does not register the website, it can be accused of breaking the rule of legalism and undermining the trust in a public institution, which fails to follow the rules itself.

The local government's service is also a very crucial tool allowing to handle some administrative matters via the *ePUAP* system, i.e. "Electronic Platform of Public Administration Services". A website is also a way to communicate interactively not only with the local society but also with the users of the global network. However, not all communes in Poland have their own websites. Among 2478 Polish communes, 15 do not have their own websites. All of them run Public Information Bulletins. Those services were created according to the 6 September 2001 Act, concerning access to public information. Public institutions must place their documents and decisions there. As a standard of modern communication, the Internet forces local governments to broaden the range of contents placed on the websites in order to increase the attractiveness of communication. The content of traditional media - press titles, radio and television programmes are also uploaded to the governments' or their subordinate institutions' websites. This allows to widen the media range, because the Internet provides newer tools and broadens the possibilities of content distribution. It results in making the local governments' services more attractive and allows to position a local government's website in the search engines in a better way. It may significantly affect the website's range.

The content of local government's media is becoming more and more thematically diverse and does not only concern office activities or local society's lives. Many communes create modern services, modeled on the professional, extensive horizontal portals. They publish not only important messages concerning the local laws, taxes, relations from the festivals and church holidays. There are also websites, where we can find information concerning national or even international political and economical affairs. Some services allow readers to check the exchange rates or stock quotes.

The development of new communication platforms, especially social networking sites, is a new challenge for local governments. Until now, they mainly related news, important events, national and church holidays or sport events. The global network widened the range of these contents and thanks to internet media, introduced the possibility of participation to the new authors. They can be the inhabitants, but also people from the outside of the local community, e.g. tourists, investors.

In community services and new media, they can not only be the readers, but also authors, senders.[32] With the use of modern communication tools the reader becomes

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[32] T. Goban-Klas, *Media i medioznawstwo,* [in:] E. Chudziński (ed.), *Słownik wiedzy o mediach*,
Warszawa 2007, p. 170-171.

the participant of the communication – a relating or commenting sender, even on a local government's forum. He or she can comment on the events from his or her immediate surroundings, and because of that his or her role in the media scenery is far greater than in the traditional media. New media allowed to increase the scale of response – local governments' media are no longer only a region or a commune, they are a possibility to reach to the global group of potential respondents. This defines the local government's media role in a new way.

VII. LOCAL GOVERNMENTS ON SOCIAL NETWORKING WEBSITES

It is difficult to imagine media trustees not using social networking websites. Popular services such as *Facebook.com* are social networks which already have 1,155 billion active users monthly.[33] It should be remembered that the Internet itself has around 2,4 billion users worldwide.[34] This means huge resources of content (users upload 250 million photos,[35] 41 thousand posts every second[36] and 4,5 billion of "likes" everyday).

It would be difficult to find an institution, organisation or an editing office, which would not use this potential and would not have its own profile on the most popular social networking sites. Data shows, that the number of new users is still increasing, and the diversity and communication abilities of these services expand. Institutions, media, offices and their clients are all involved in the Web 2.0. Not all local governments are interested in such extensions of reception or in starting social-media relations.

37,9% of communes, which filled in the questionnaire claimed that they dispose of an official account in the social networking sites. The most popular site is *Facebook*. 96,3% of the communes which claimed to use social networking sites, had their own page on *Facebook*. The second one is *YouTube* – 18,5%. The services used more rarely were: *Twitter*, *G+*, occasionally *Nasza Klasa* (Polish social networking service). One commune declared having profiles on *Pinterest*, *Goldenline*, *Vimeo* and *Foursquare.com*.

Communes which engaged in the social networks notice the advantages of "sharing" and "liking". When asked to characterize reasons why they had official profiles, they listed primarily (arguments from the questionnaire):

1. Arguments concerning the range
    -   reaching bigger number of recipients with the use of new technology,
    -   reaching bigger number of people from the outside of the commune,
    -   reaching more clients,
    -   "everybody is on *Facebook*",

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[33] Smith, C., *Planet's 24 Largest Social Media Sites, And Where Their Next Wave Of Growth Will Come From* http://www.businessinsider.com/a-global-social-media-census-2013-10.

[34] *Internet users in the world*, [online:] http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm.

[35] *Internet 2012 in numbers*, [online:] http://royal.pingdom.com/2013/01/16/internet-2012-in-numbers/.

[36] *What happens online in 60 second?*, [online:] http://blog.qmee.com/qmee-online-in-60-seconds/.

- *Facebook* is a medium which is used more often than the commune website by the inhabitants.

2. Arguments concerning the perception of the local government
   - "humanization" of local government, showing its human face,
   - well perceived by the users,
   - wider promotion of the town/city,
   - a perfect tool to promote events,
   - creating positive image of the town/city and its local government.

3. Arguments concerning communication and interactivity
   - contact with the inhabitants,
   - it shows the government's openness to the opinions of others,
   - local government is open for discussions, comments,
   - maintaining relations with younger generations,
   - possibility of interaction with readers in a cultural manner (as opposed to the internet forum, which was closed because of the defamating, anonymous posts)

4. Arguments strengthening local communities
   - strengthens the relationships among inhabitants who seek common good – our little homeland.

5. Economical arguments
   - free (in the sense of free of charge).

62,1% of local governments do not see the need to create a profile on social networking sites. When asked for their opinions, they answered:
   - there are unofficial government profiles informing about local governments,
   - profiles are unnecessary for the local governments,
   - lack of interest from the side of local communities (this opinion was presented by the town which issues a free weekly in circulation of 40 thousand copies),
   - local government has no possibility to finance such a venture,
   - lack of legal basis,
   - little importance.

Communes which notice the importance of such channel of communication place references to the social networking sites next to the very important links, such as access to the Public Information Bulletin, which is compulsory to run (author's note).

Using social networking sites by the local governments may seem controversial as there are no regulations concerning "giving out likes" by the offices. Such activities can be treated as supporting companies or people that have profiles on the social networking sites. Therefore, it can be read as a supporting "like" given by the public institution. Local governments' activities in social networking sites, e.g. "sharing" their attractive contents from the website created with the use of public money, in reality supports a private company. This company uses the materials to build the profile of its own advertisement and marketing recipient. There is also a case of publishing trademarks of the social networking sites, or advertising private companies on the public institutions' sites.

VIII. "LITTLE-MOBILE" LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

The development of the new media is nowadays connected with the development of mobile communication technology. Such devices as smartphones and tablets are replacing desktop computers thanks to the universality of their use and a number of applications allowing access to the Internet. Never before have there been such versatile tools for communication. The data from TNS Poland[37] indicates that in 2013 44% of Poles had a smartphone and 46% of them made use of mobile applications. In the first quarter of 2014 10.17% pageviews generated on Polish websites came from mobile devices[38]. The growing trend is clear. This encourages website owners to adapt the technologies that allow the content to be viewed on screens of different sizes and to produce applications that take a bigger advantage of mobility. An additional factor is growing popularity of commercial applications and websites where we can download them. *Google Play* stores a million programmes, and *App Store* has 900 thousand. Over 50 billion different applications have been downloaded from the *Google* website only[39] [Warren], which demonstrates the potential of this type of channels of communication with customers, including those dedicated to the improvement of communication between citizens and government offices. An example of this is the application of the capital city "Warsaw 19115",[40] which allows quick and simple reporting problems with the city's infrastructure. Olsztyn ("Safe Olsztyn") and Poznan ("Intervention") have similar applications. The strongest is Cracow where mobile programmes refer to as many as seven different cultural events plus an application called "MPK Kraków", which helps to use public transport in the city. In total, 22 applications referred to as official municipal or commissioned by the government offices. It is not clear who disposes of the data collected by the software because in many applications the name of a private company is given as Seller. This also refers to the applications that can collect sensitive personal data, such as ones notifying about danger, in which the informant must give data that can help in their identification. There are eight applications of this kind, affiliated by offices, but "sold" by private companies, including the website that aids the Municipal Council of Lublin to run open debates.

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37   *Mobile marketing in Poland 2013/2014* http://jestem.mobi/2014/02/nowy-raport-marketing-mobilny-w-polsce-2013-2014/

38   *Perspectives of development of online mobility in Poland* http://iab.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/raport_iab_polska_mobile.pdf, p. 13.

39   Warren, C., *Google Play Hits 1 Million Apps* http://mashable.com/2013/07/24/google-play-1-million/

40   The survey of applications was carried out in December 2014 in Google Play website.

IX. SUMMARY

According to research, local government media, especially the centres, are developing towards a strong presence in both traditional and new media. It can be estimated that the number of titles in printed press has increased over the last few years. The transformation of the political system caused big changes at the market of local media. Local governments, encouraged by legal changes and the new autonomy in disposing of their resources, started to publish titles in paper version and in electronic media. The research has shown that communes are varied publishers both in terms of the frequency of their magazines and the number of printed copies. A relationship between the size of the commune, the type of the magazine and its circulation is clearly visible. Towns with district rights and cities naturally have more considerable capital and human resources. This is also confirmed by the structures of media organization. Big communes have a tendency to professionalize the content and message, thus entrusting creating the material with journalists. In smaller communes these proportions are clearly reversed, which may also suggest poorer quality of publications. The results of this research can serve as a starting point for qualitative research of local government media and for verifying this hypothesis.

With the widespread use of the Internet, communes got a chance to develop communication in a new area and by means of interactive tools, but not all of them make use of it. Still a small number of communes does not own their own Internet website.

However, the holders of local government media see the potential of online channels of communication, which is demonstrated by attempts at increasing the attractiveness of media coverage. Designing complex web portals, with a rich information base, indicates the necessity to go beyond local matters.

A worrying fact is not following the principle of legalism, and in consequence failing to register the website as a press title. In the context of communes, especially big – urban and towns with district rights – trying to professionalize media coverage, these issues will have to be resolved, mainly for the sake of establishing the responsibility for the content, the rights and duties of journalists who, not infrequently, are simultaneously officials.

An additional argument for legalism is the involvement of communes in new channels of communication. The presence in social networking sites is not regulated and the people creating the content do not represent themselves but a public office with its reputation and trust from the local community.

A challenge for local governments is the mobile transmission. During research, no application has been found which would have been created by urban-rural or rural communes. Despite sparse programmes designed for smartphones and tablets, their undiscovered potential has only been noticed by large municipal centres. It can be related to the above mentioned financial situation of powerful local governments, it is worth observing this dynamic segment of communication.

The research has shown that a majority of local government media, especially in urban-rural and rural communes, still have an analog, "paper", form. Electronic media and new

media is the domain of cities and towns with district rights. These centres develop tools for online communication, especially the presence and activity in social networking sites.

The dynamic development of new online communication tools should mainly inspire the media regulator and the legislative to take action aimed at creating clear rules for the development of such a big media segment as local governments and their subordinate institutions. A market is emerging which could compete with the commercial media. The digitalization of local government media coverage can significantly influence the shape of the new media scenery.

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