

# **CRUSH CANCER! THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY OF THE RAK’N’ROLL FOUNDATION AS AN EXAMPLE OF AN ALTERNATIVE FORM OF COMMUNICATING ABOUT HEALTH**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The goal of this article is an analysis of the function, which NGOs perform in the health system in Poland, as well as their participation in universal-social debate concerning health. The object of this paper, is Communications strategy of the Rak’n’Roll Foundation, one of the Polish NGOs with the highest level of recognition, operating in the sphere of health. On the basis of the author’s own research, she describes the activities undertaken by the Foundation to create and develop mutual relations with the media and analyze how it is represented in the media, as well as the efficacy of its own means of communication. She raises the question as to whether the communication activities of the “Rak’n’Roll” Foundation aim to improve the health care system (*support*) or does it rather contribute to an “overloading of the system” (that is a situation where the demands of individuals exceed the ability of the state to act) or perhaps they don’t have any greater significance on an institutional level?

**Key words:** NGO, communications strategy, health care, mediatization

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“Overloading the system” occurs when citizens’ demands exceed the ability of the state to meet those demands. In other words, when the expectations generated towards the system (*input*), as well as assistance for the system (*support*) compose a counterbalance to the *output*. That is, when the *input* is composed of above all, of claims dealing with the solution of problems (*demands*) *support* is measured by the level of confidence and acceptance of citizens maintain for the authorities, and *output* is composed of the effective activities of the state on behalf of society as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Overloading the system does not necessarily have to be the result of a lowered effectiveness of the state, it may also be the result of increasing demands by society. These in turn, are not born solely of current needs of the population linked with, for example, the lengthening lifespans but also originate from an ongoing professionalization of the representation of society’s interests.

The embedding of NGOs in the health service in Poland, as well as the assuming of some health care functions by the citizens’ institutions, which should be carried out by state institutions, may be perceived as symptoms of “overloading the system”. On the one hand the health care system is not fulfilling society’s expectations. On the other hand, the level of consciousness and engagement by citizens in matters which affect them is increasing. Together with the development of civil society, moreover, new institutionalized activists have appeared on the public scene, particularly of NGOs, which have established as their goal participation in a society-wide debate on the subject of health, as well as maintain an influence in public matters in this sphere.

Depending on the espoused postulates, regarding the character and mode of operations, NGOs also fulfill social functions and influence the climate of public opinion in varied manners. When articulating their own needs, of a social character, the mature structures of integrating often fulfill the function of creating role-models. Creating alternate values and putting them into practice in social life, they express their protest against the system and its policies. Moreover, these NGOs take up such subjects which are ignored or marginalized by state-run institutions. Finally, they often fulfill the role of partners of government administration, in the process of cooperating with society, understood as a unique form of consultation, enabling preparations which do not arouse social protests regarding decisions, and avoiding conflict and “early warning” signals. In this context, NGOs are endowed with the unique role of being a buffer between society and the state.<sup>2</sup> Civic institutions in Poland are, to a significant degree, engaged in the production of basic social services, i.e. the health service and care for senior citizens. It’s necessary to point out, that the social activities of civic institutions gain support in public opinion, to a significant degree, at the cost of prestige via the state, which is saddled with guilt for the inefficiency of health care and social service systems.

<sup>1</sup> Kepplinger 2007, p. 181–185.

<sup>2</sup> For more on the subject see: Sroka 2009 and Hess 2013, p. 74–79.

### *Characteristic Attributes of NGOs in Poland*

Contemporary democracies are being transformed into entities in which social and political spheres melt together ever deeper. Institutions of civic society have been developing in European democracies since 1989, have taken shape under the influence of specific conditions of social-political life, historical factors, and social structures appearing in each of the states of the former Communist block. After two decades of freedom, each of these countries has formed its own “NGO elite” which is recognized in society, and influences the formation of public opinion in matters dealing with their activity.

Results from research conducted by the Klon/Jawor Association show, that in 2012, there were 72 thousand associations and 11 thousand foundations registered in Poland.<sup>3</sup> The authors of this report have called attention to the fact that within these official statistics of GUS, there is a certain number of organizations which is hidden and difficult to discern, which in reality no longer exist or conduct no activity. On the basis of a verification of the REGON register of 2008, conducted by GUS, it is assumed that the percentage of such instances does not exceed 24% of all registered NGOs.<sup>4</sup> The basis for this variety in the Polish NGO sector are diverse dimensions of its organizational activities. According to the aforementioned report, the majority of civic institutions conduct their core activity in the field of sports, tourism and recreation (38%). The second most numerous group is of those organizations which concentrate their activity on culture and art. Some 14% of organizations inform about education and upbringing as their main sphere of activity. Public health is the principal activity of 6% of NGOs, as well as social services, social work activities, humanitarian and emergency services which compose a separate category in research.<sup>5</sup>

Research based on their declarations of membership indicate that some fifty thousand associations have approximately 3.5 million Poles as members,<sup>6</sup> however, some 1/3 of these members are passive, and don't really participate in any of these organizations' activities. One may detect the truism, that the greater and more massive the association, the lower the percentage of members who are actually engaged in its activities. A differentiation of organizations according to their amount of members is quite extensive. Small organizations seem to predominate. Approximately every twentieth (6%) association has less than 15 members, and

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<sup>3</sup> The Klon/Jawor Association, since 2000 has systematically monitored the condition of NGOs in Poland. In their annual research report, they supply information concerning, amongst others, the numbers, areas, and spheres of activity of NGOs, as well as the forms and degrees of commitment of their employees. See: [www.klon.org.pl](http://www.klon.org.pl). The data cited below comes from reports by: Przewłocka, Adamiak, Zajac 2013 as well as Herbst, Przewłocka 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Przewłocka, Adamiak, Zajac 2013, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Foundations don't have members, therefore data concerning membership refers only to associations. To form a normal association, a minimum of three people is necessary, and to form a registered association (the most popular in Poland) – 15 people are necessary.

40% have between 15 and 30 members, while some 16% have over 100 members.<sup>7</sup>

The activity of NGOs is based above all on internal volunteer work.<sup>8</sup> In 50% of these organizations, their members dedicate at least 42 hours a month to their organizations, and 1/6th of them dedicate at least 170 hours a month. External volunteer work, that is unpaid work for an organization that is performed by people who are not formal members of said organizations, is becoming an ever more popular form of social activism. In 2006, 40% of organizations reported assistance from non-members, in 2008 this percentage rose to 44%, so that by 2010, external volunteers operated in half of all NGOs, most often working with problems dealing with social services and social assistance (66%). This means however, that every second NGO does not want assistance from people who are not members, or perhaps doesn't know how to, or is able to, encourage and mobilize external volunteers. While it's true that over half of these organizations employ a staff, but only 1/5 of these organizations (19%) employ full-time personnel, and only 6% of them possess more than five full-time employees.<sup>9</sup>

The Polish NGO sector is dominated by regional or local activities. Two-thirds of these organizations (64%), do not conduct activities above the provincial level.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, approximately 49% of all NGOs have their headquarters in large cities (10% in Warsaw), which attests to the fact that the terrain of their operations is not principally local. Thus, the link between the range of the area of operations and place where the NGO is officially registered, plays a key role. On a national or international level, almost three quarter of these organizations have their headquarters in the capital (71%) and nearly half have their headquarters in the remaining provincial capitals (48%).<sup>11</sup>

Results of research conducted by the Klon/Jawor Association indicate that in addition to a slow, but systematic process of "solidifying of the age structure", dependent upon a relative increase of the participation of older organizations, functioning for at least five years, and therefore having the potential of putting down roots in the social consciousness.

On the basis of interviews conducted by this author with leaders of Polish NGOs functioning on a national level,<sup>12</sup> which actively participate in the public

<sup>7</sup> Herbst, Przewłocka 2011, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> Unpaid time dedicated to an organization by its members.

<sup>9</sup> Przewłocka, Adamiak, Zając 2013, p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Over one third is limited to the district or county level (34%), 7% of these organizations are concerned only with activities which deal with their closes neighbors Przewłocka, Adamiak, Zając 2013, p. 11, 12.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> Since December 2012 I have conducted 10 individual interview with representatives of the following NGOs: Polska Akcja Humanitarna, Fundacja demosEuropa, Fundacja Obywatelskiego Rozwoju, Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego, Centrum im. Adama Smitha, Fundacja Rak'n'Roll – Wygraj Życie, Instytut Sobieskiego, Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową, Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka, Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje. Hess 2013, p. 256–300.

debate and are systematically present in the media, one could affirm that in addition, these social activists possess a good evaluation of the third sector in Poland. Above all they call attention to the progressive institutional development and expanding range of activities of NGOs. In the opinion of representatives of Polish NGOs functioning on a national level, the main problem remains that of finances, which deals with obtaining funds for day-to-day operations for NGOs, as well as institutional barriers (for example ambiguous legal regulations). The most often perceived example of the main problem of NGOs, as perceived by those social activists working in them, is the low level of civic and social awareness found in society as a whole.<sup>13</sup> One of the most often indicated internal problems of the third sector, is the low level cooperation between civic organizations. One may conclude, on the basis of statements by representatives of NGOs, that large NGOs rather willingly support weak third sector organizations, as well as undertake activities with them, but only sporadically cooperate with each other. Moreover, they often perceive each other as being rivals.<sup>14</sup>

Public opinion research indicates that NGO activity is ever-more perceived in a better light by Polish society. Even though the majority of people questioned still do not perceive a significant influence of NGOs improving the general well-being of society as a whole, research results indicate a gradual improvement of the image of the social sector. Poles are little by little starting to appreciate the significance of these organizations on a local level. In 2003, as many as 63% of those questioned, were of the opinion that abuses of power and influence private interests occur in NGOs, whereas in 2010 less than half of those polled (47%) shared that opinion. In 2006, only 26% of respondents thought that NGOs helped solve social problems in their neighborhoods, while by 2011 this percentage rose to 35.<sup>15</sup> Poles still don't perceive however, the influence of NGOs on the situation of people on a national level. Some 46% agree that these organizations generally don't have a great influence on solving important social problems in Poland, while only 20% is of an opposing view.

Among social workers themselves however, the image of elites from NGOs, as professional entities, whose essential function is to educate society, as well as the view that the third sector is capable of working out the most profitable institutional social solutions dealing with matters and problems which are undertaken in this sphere, dominates.<sup>16</sup> In addition, NGOs are continually more often taking up on the one hand, activity which is aimed at focusing the attention of public opinion on problems, which are minimalized or not perceived by society and/or those

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 292–299.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 294.

<sup>15</sup> Analogous research results from 2003 and 2006 attest to this. Barely 26% of respondents in 2006 considered that NGOs solve social problems in their neighborhoods. In 2003, as much as 63% that corruption and abuse are found in NGOs, in 2010 this opinion was shared by 47% of respondents. Gumkowska 2011; see more: [www.klon.org.pl](http://www.klon.org.pl) as well as [www.civicpedia.ngo.pl](http://www.civicpedia.ngo.pl).

<sup>16</sup> Hess 2013, p. 298.

in authority. On the other hand, they taking up activity which has as its goal the effective influencing of public institutions responsible for essential matters, from the viewpoint of their activities.<sup>17</sup> In both the first and second instance, they have to communicate with their target groups. With this goal in mind, NGOs take advantage of various means of communication, both indirect (the media) and direct (for example in the form of meetings). In order to influence the external milieu, they have to conduct a debate through an intermediary, that is the media.

### *Media Representation of the NGO Sector and the Phenomenon of the Rak'n'Roll Foundation*

Civic institutions have an opportunity to initiate and conduct a debate using the media as an intermediary, in two manners: employing their own media (above all through their own web pages) or by getting their message through to the mainstream media. Through the intervention of their own media, NGOs may undertake attempts to directly initiate the public debate, as well as communicate with their milieu. The much desired presence of their message in the mainstream media however, enables them to have visibility and recognition in the public sphere on a greater – than heretofore – scale, providing them with potential access to a wider spectrum of social groups, composed of those who are recipients of the media. Both of these channels of communications are employed simultaneously, and are complementary, because they serve as a tool to construct the positions of specific civic institutions as participants in the public debate.

Research results dealing with the media representation of the II sector in 2011, conducted by the author of this paper, distinguished the types and specific NGOs, which during the period analyzed, were most often portrayed in various types of the mainstream media.<sup>18</sup> In the message transmitted by the media, 275 objects were recognized as belonging to the third sector. The majority of them were present in newspapers and/or reports which appeared on the television news, once, twice, or thrice. Sixteen NGOs however, were identified, which appeared regularly in the media (see table 1).

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 299.

<sup>18</sup> A quantitative and qualitative analyses of reports in the press in national dailies, such as: *Dziennik*, *Gazeta Prawna*, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Nasz Dziennik*, *Rzeczpospolita* as well as television appearances broadcast in the main news programs of various television stations, *Wiadomości* – TVP 1, *Panorama* – TVP 2, *Wydarzenia* – Polsat and *Fakty* – TVN. Every thirty days a specific day was chosen (365 days in the year divided by 30 is approximately 12). The research material was from 46 issues of national dailies, in which there were 5045 mentions in the press, as well as 48 times in main television news programs, where there we 486 mentions. The research results were thoroughly discussed in: Hess 2013.

**Table 1. NGOs most frequently portrayed by the media (Frequency of Press and TV Appearances – in numbers)**

Name of Organization	Press	Television	Total
Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju	10	2	12
Centrum im. Adama Smitha	5	4	9
DemosEuropa	5	4	9
Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego	6	3	9
Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka	4	5	9
Polska Akcja Humanitarna	5	3	8
Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową	6	1	7
Fundacja Dzieci Nicyzje	4	2	6
Fundacja Rak'n'Roll	3	2	5
Instytut Sobieskiego	4	1	5
Kampania przeciw Homofobii	3	1	4
Instytut Obywatelski	4	0	4
Fundacja Pro – prawo do życia	4	0	4
Federacja na rzecz Kobiet i Planowania Rodziny	4	0	4
Instytut Spraw Publicznych	3	1	4
Fundacja Panoptykon	3	1	4
<b>Razem</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>103</b>

Source: author.

Think tanks are the largest group of NGOs which regularly appeared in the media, which at the same time occupied the highest positions. These research results may attest to the fact that on the one hand, the professionalism of expert organizations in the sphere of media contact, and on the other hand, the media's need to have expert opinions and information, regarding the third sector. Those foundations on a national and international level, which are easily recognized by Polish media recipients (Helsinki Human Rights Foundation, Polish Humanitarian Action) are also found in this ranking. The third group of organizations is composed however, of civic organizations, which goal is to make Poles aware of different problems appearing in various spheres of social life, and undertaking activity aimed at ameliorating these problems, and preventing any negative effects resulting from them. Fundacja Dzieci Nicyzje (Nobody's Children Foundation), Fundacja Rak'n'Roll (Rak'n'Roll Foundation), Fundacja Pro – prawo do życia (Pro Foundation – Right to Life), Kampania przeciw Homofobii (Campaign Against Homofobia). Among the aforementioned foundations, there is only one that operates in the sphere of health – the “Rak'n'Roll. Win your life”! (The name

of the foundation is a play on words instead of “Rock and Roll”, it’s “rak – Polish for cancer – n’roll” – trans.) This doesn’t mean that universally recognized organizations such as for example the Great Orchestra for Christmas Aid, don’t appear in the media, but in 2011 they were represented sporadically (for instance, they were the subjects of several media spots, but at the same time) and/or appeared in one branch of the media (they were presented only in the national press, or only in selected publications, or only in the television news programs, or even only aired by one television station). The Rak’n’Roll Foundation fulfills all three criteria demanded by this research: it was portrayed in at least two national dailies, as well as on two television programs at the same time. On the basis of the research carried out, one could affirm that this foundation is conducting an effective Communications strategy, oriented on arousing the media’s interest in subjects related to health, which the foundation itself takes up in the public sphere, as well as in actions it organizes.

The Rak’n’Roll Foundation is a young organization. It was created in October 2009 on the initiative of Magda Prokopowicz, now deceased. After her experience with an oncologic disease, the founder of this foundation desired to aid other sick people, who had similar illnesses to hers.<sup>19</sup> One of the main reasons for starting this foundation by Magda Prokopowicz, was the insufficient access to knowledge in the public sphere concerning this sickness and the ways of dealing with it, not only in the medical sense, but also in the social one. An important impulse for her to take action, was the reaction to her friends and family to the news that she was sick with cancer, and the manner in which sick people in general are perceived in society. The main goal of the foundation was to change the stereotype of cancer as a disease, and to improve the quality of life of those ill with it. After Magda Prokopowicz’s death in 2012, Jacek Maciejewski became the chairman of the Rak’n’Roll Foundation; he was the general director of advertising at the Havas World Wide advertising agency, which from the foundation’s inception created the artwork for its campaign. He was also the author of the foundation’s name and logo. Katarzyna Kobro – pseudonym “Kapsydra” – has been the director of the foundation since June 1, 2013. She is a biographer, social worker, parliamentary advisor, and for many years has been linked with artistic activity. In 2011 she was diagnosed with lymphatic leukemia. Information concerning her disease was published only when the sickness was able to be controlled. She told her story in

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<sup>19</sup> Magda Prokopowicz directed two firms, an acting agency and a talent agency. She found out she had cancer when she was 27. She went through chemotherapy, a complicated operation, and gave birth to a healthy child. She spoke in an unconventional manner about all the stages of the disease and her experiences in her fight with cancer, in the public sphere. She also edited a blog, which became the calling card of the Foundation. Her goal was to promote positive thinking in the public sphere, and reveal what is the truth, and what is myth, in the public image of the battle with cancer. She died in June 2012. After her death, Jacek Maciejewski the general creative director at the Havas World-wide Advertising Agency became director of the Rak’n’Roll Foundation. From the beginning of the Foundation, he created its visual images of its campaigns, and thought up its name and designed its logo. See: [www.raknroll.pl](http://www.raknroll.pl).



an interview with an anthropologist, Waldemar Kuligowski, entitled *Rak Control + Delete How to Speak about Yours, and Other People's Cancer* which was published on the blog of the Rak'n'Roll Foundation.<sup>20</sup>

The mission of the foundation is to change the manner in which people think about cancer and the quality of life of people who have contracted this disease. Rak'n'Roll conducts activities for those with cancer, but also prevention of the disease and health in general. It also undertakes activities to increase social awareness of this disease. It's a small foundation, which employs two people part-time. Its activities are based on volunteer work, both internal and external. It has its headquarters in Warsaw, but significant help is provided by groups of volunteers, who are located outside of Warsaw, who promote the organization's activities in their free-time.

### *The Communication Strategy of the Rak'n'Roll Foundation*

The communications strategy of the Foundation is centered on two basic types of action. First, there are initiatives which concentrate on attracting the interest of the media and attempt thereby to reach the greatest amount of people possible. Most often the goal is to gather funds and get donors. Second, to undertake activity directed at a narrow group of recipients, which is based on volunteer work and foundation contacts.

The target groups to which this message is directed, depends upon the specific campaign. In the first years of its activity Magda Prokopowicz focused on action which had the goal of educating and assisting young women (25+), who, like her, have contracted cancer. The circle of beneficiaries of the foundation has increased to the degree of the foundation's expansion and possibilities. Today, the foundation's activities are not limited to subjects linked with breast cancer. Campaigns are also directed to men and older women, who are open to and accept the language and style of communicating which the foundation employs. This simple, and at the same time shocking language, is an invariable attribute of the Rak'n'Roll Foundation's campaigns.

The Rak'n'Roll Foundation is connoted above all with an eccentric, and at times controversial action supporting people struggling with cancer. The most well-known of these include: the "donate your hair" social campaign, encouraging women to have their hair cut at a hairdresser's, and donate it to a wig company, for women who are undergoing chemotherapy; the "1% campaign" is identified with a television commercial in which two smiling girls are smiling young ladies are saying that they are they are gathering money for "their tits, new hairdos, and drugs." (this of course is a joke, in that they are gathering money for breast cancer, wigs for women sick

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<sup>20</sup> <http://media.netpr.pl/generic/release/243748/katarzyna-kapsyda-kobro-nowa-prezes-fundacji-rak-n-roll-wygraj-zycie> (access date: 3.01.2014).

with it, and the necessary medication for these patients – trans)<sup>21</sup>; the “trick Cancer” campaign is supposed to make people aware that medicine is making progress, and it is worth fighting for every half-year of life; or the campaign dealing with prostate cancer prevention, the slogan of which is “You talk with your buddies about women’s behinds, talk about your own”. A lot of popularity has also been gained by the foundation’s last projects. Among the goals of the Rak’n’Rolling campaign is the propagation of physical activity, travelling and conquering one’s own limitations as a motivation to fight with cancer as well as return to a normal life. The participants of this project include people who have overcome cancer, complete a bicycle course (conquering the Zwrotnik Raka (Tropic of Cancer) – 2012) or riding to mountain tops (the “Hardy Rolling” project – 2013).

The Rak’n’Roll foundation maintains extensive contacts with media and at the same time attracts media interest in its campaigns. One of the basic Communications activities in this sphere is obtaining new famous persons as ambassadors of the foundation’s initiatives.<sup>22</sup> The organization’s recognition as well as the attractiveness of the action it has undertaken has meant that it isn’t difficult to get these ambassadors. Numerous stars regularly participate in its action. Public figures not only propagate the foundation’s initiatives and its image, they also call the attention of the media. What is also attractive, from the journalists’ viewpoint, is that Rak’n’Roll Foundation puts them in contact with those people under its care, who are not afraid to speak about their disease and experience in the media. The often appear as guest speakers at functions dedicated to the Foundation’s projects, or as commentators on subjects related with curing cancer. Another favorable factor, in attracting the media’s attention to those subjects which the Rak’n’Roll Foundation takes up is that at times some of the people who are working in the media have cancer, and therefore often show initiative dealing with and propagating the activities and actions undertaken by the Foundation.

Media reports concerning the Foundation include be all information on the subject of the action and campaigns conducted by Rak’n’Roll. The organization efficiently calls media attention to itself. At the same time, representatives of the foundation appear in the media as commentators of the events linked with the care of those people sick with cancer, and solutions for the problems dealing with health care in this field, undertaken by the state at various levels.

The organization impacts public opinion above all through the traditional media, though it also cooperates with Polish local and national news media, for ex-

<sup>21</sup> Magda Prokopowicz and Joanna Salyga appeared here.

<sup>22</sup> Kampanie Fundacji The Rak’n’Roll Foundation Campaign was officially supported by, amongst others, Michał Olszański, radio and television journalist, Marta Kuligowska, journalist and announcer, Reni Jusis, singer, Tomasz Sianecki, television and radio journalist, Marzena Sienkiewicz, journalist and weather announcer, Krzysztof Ziemicz, journalist and television announcer, Dorota Wellman, Marcin Prokop, journalists and announcers, Paulina Przybysz, singer, journalist, Beata Sadowska, journalist and announcer, Alicja Resich-Modlińska, program director, Kamil Durczok, journalist and announcer, Henryk Sawka, cartoonist, Edward Lutczyń, cartoonist. See: [www.raknroll.pl](http://www.raknroll.pl) (access date: 6.01.2014).

ample with women's publications. The Rak'n'Roll Foundation's contacts with celebrities and journalists is linked with Magdalena Prokopowicz's work, as she managed an acting and fashion agency. She created the first contact network, which is constantly expanding. The activities, promoting the Foundation's projects in the public sphere, are conducted by workers and volunteers, who phone and send press releases to favorably oriented media outlets and to individual journalists, as well as to the Agencja Havas Worldwide press agency, disseminates information on this subject pro bono.

The Rak'n'Roll Foundation makes full use of its web page, with the goal of fulfilling its information function, in accordance with a one-way communication paradigm, however it doesn't use its Internet tools which enable two-way communications with its receivers. The organization possesses a clear, esthetically pleasing, functional, and constantly updated web page which is its basic means of contact with its public. The wide array of types of promoting its activities, and engaging people available on the web page of the Rak'n'Roll Foundation in comparison with other web pages of other NGOs, may be attributed to by a comparison with other NGOs, which is presented in table no. 2. Among 9 civic institutions selected for research, which are regularly present in the media discourse, the Rak'n'Roll Foundation is found in third place. with reference to the number of elements on its web page which fulfill an informative function. It is necessary to point out, that all the web pages of the NGOs researched, possess elements which contain information dealing with how one may financially support this institution, either via the institution itself, or as an individual web user, however only four of the civic organizations researched, (including the Rak'n'Roll Foundation) display on their web pages how an individual may become engaged in the foundation's work as a volunteer.

An exceptionally important element of analysis of the means employed by these NGOs on their web pages regarding contact with their public, is establishing, if their web pages contain informative texts content concerning their presence in the media, as well as content destined specifically for the media. The "we in the media" bookmark, is on the one hand, a form of presentation of a specific position of the organization of an NGO on a given subject (especially, when experts give their opinion in this media material), and on the other hand, it is a means of stressing that the voice of NGOs count in the public debate (because it is noticed and got through to the media). An analysis of the web pages of NGOs show that a significant majority of civic organizations present in the public debate, espouse on their web pages media material, which features their activity, their representative appears, or is the author of the publication. The NGOs however show less organizational attention is focused on information and material destined "for the media". The Rak'n'Roll Foundation is one of those rare organizations which makes an effort to allow journalists to find information which is destined, and at times formatted for the media, on its web page. There is a specific place on its web page, where the content and information were created with the needs of journalists in mind,

concerning the organization and contact information concerning with whom those people, the members of the media should get in touch with.<sup>23</sup> This is essential, as journalists often complain that they don't have the possibility of making quick contact with civic institutions.<sup>24</sup>

**Table 2. Selected Elements on the Web Pages of NGOs, Fulfilling an Information Function\***

NGO Name	Self-Promoting Media					Media Relations			Forms of Individuals' Engagement			
	periodicals	reports	publications	blogs	other	„In the Media”	„For the Media” bookmarks „dla mediów”	contact for media	financial support	volunteer work	newsletter	other
Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Centrum im. Adama Smitha	-	x	-	x	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	x
Fundacja demosEuropa	-	x	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	-	x	-
Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego	-	x	x	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-
Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka	-	x	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	-	x	-
Polska Akcja Humanitarna	-	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	x	x	x	-
Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową	x	x	x	-	x	x	-	-	x	-	-	-
Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje	x	x	x	-	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Fundacja Rak'n'Roll	-	-	-	x	-	x	x	x	x	x	-	x
Instytut Sobieskiego	-	x	x	-	x	x	-	-	x	-	-	-

\* As of 18.12.2012

Source: author.

<sup>23</sup> Hess 2013, s. 223–235.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*.

An analysis of the web page regarding the presence of elements enabling an active engagement on the part of the recipients in the message, indicated, that a significant majority of civic institutions researched limit their Internet website to a Facebook banner (*community plug*). This would indicate a low level of using the Web 2.0 application, permitting an active engagement of receivers in the message, on the NGO's webpage. The Internet page is treated more like an up-down transmission belt, and not as a means of two-way communication. What is also noteworthy, is the Rak'n'Roll Foundation's providing the option of Internet users to comment on the content on their web page. This is an important element of getting them engaged in the discussion on the topics and activities undertaken by the foundation.

**Table 3. Basic Communication Channels Available on the Internet Pages of Various NGOs\***

NGO Name	Social Media Portals								Feedback	
	Facebook	Nasza-klasa	YouTube	Twitter	Blip	Google+	Flickr	Other	Content commentary	Content creation
Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-
Centrum im. Adama Smitha	x	-	x	-	-	-	x	-	-	-
Fundacja demosEuropa	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	-	-	-
Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka	x	-	x	x	-	-	-	x	x	-
Polska Akcja Humanitarna	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-
Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fundacja "Dzieci Niczyje"	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fundacja Rak'n'Roll	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-
Instytut Sobieskiego	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

As of 10.12.2012

Source: author.

At the same time, a verification of the presence of profiles of those civic institutions researched, in social media, and their communications activity within these profiles, was conducted with the aid of the following Internet web browsers: Firefox, Internet Explorer and Google Chrome, which showed a high level of professionalism in this sphere of communication.

**Table 4. Communication activity of NGOs in social media (A – active, N – not active)\***

NGO Name	Social Media Profile							
	Facebook	Nasza-klasa	YouTube	Twitter	Blip	Google+	Flickr	Other
Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju	A	A	A	A	-	-	-	A
Centrum im. Adama Smitha	A	-	N	-	-	-	N	-
Fundacja demosEuropa	A	-	N	-	-	-	-	-
Fundacja im. Stefana Batorego	A	-	N	A	N	A	-	-
Helsińska Fundacja Praw Człowieka	A	N	N	A	-	-	-	N
Polska Akcja Humanitarna	A	A	A	-	A	A	-	A
Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową	A	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fundacja Dzieci Niczyje	A	A	A	-	-	-	-	-
Fundacja Rak'n'Roll	A	A	N	A	-	-	-	-
Instytut Sobieskiego	A	-	A	-	-	-	-	-

\* As of 18.12.2012

Source: author.

The communications activity of the Rak'n'Roll Foundation depends on maintaining a profile only on the most popular portals (Facebook, YouTube, Nasza Klasa and/or Twitter). The Foundation constantly updates its Facebook profile in a professional manner. The number of registered fans, that is of those people who have decided to click the "Like" button on their Facebook profile, in relation to the content presented by specific organizations, attests to a certain degree to the engagement of receivers to the message of a given civic organization. The Rak'n'Roll Foundation has a fanclub which has more than 29,000 registered

users.<sup>25</sup> Amongst those organizations researched, only the Polska Akcja Humanitarna (Polish Humanitarian Action) had more (over 50,000 registered users<sup>26</sup>), which is an institution which is significantly larger, richer, and possessing a more substantial organizational structure. The Rak'n'Roll Foundation has in addition, a more active profile on Nasza Klasa and on Twitter. The foundation however, has ceased publishing a newsletter and is neglecting to update its YouTube material. It should be pointed out that this portal is an attractive communication channel enabling the disseminating of audio visual material, immortalizing events and actions organized by specific civic organizations, and/or films promoting social campaigns, or as its own news channel. The Nasza Klasa portal in turn, and even those which are constantly updated, currently fulfill a minor role in the commitment of receivers in commenting on and initiating content in the field of this social medium. Each of the analyzed profiles on Nasza Klasa possess only basic functions and there is only a small number of friends registered on them.<sup>27</sup>

### *Summary*

The results of research conducted in the third sector unilaterally point to the existence of an increasing professionalization of civic institutions in the sphere of public relations.<sup>28</sup> The essential elements of this activity is the construction and development of mutual relations with the media, as well as the creation of their own channel of Communications, which allow the possibility of direct access with information, to recipients, as well as engaging in two-way (feedback) communications.

The communication strategy of the Rak'n'Roll Foundation, which is on a high level, consists on the one hand, of a good knowledge of the logic of the media, and on the other, it takes advantage of media tools in the elaboration and conducting of social campaigns, which are well utilized by commercial entities.

From the inception of the Foundation, its coherent image and promotional activities were under the care of a highly professional public relations firm – Agencja Havas Worldwide, which has performed these services pro bono. The basic principle of the Foundation's activities regarding its image, is one of consistency. This applies equally to the visualization (its logo and color scheme), labeling (the names and slogans of each successive campaign harkens back to the name of the Foundation, and are consistent with it), the rhetoric (a simple, uncompromising language, which has to rivet attention and even shock the recipient) as well as the style of its modus operandi (which emphasizes joie de vivre, activity, and overcoming barriers). Moreover, the communications strategy of the Rak'n'Roll

<sup>25</sup> See: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Fundacja-RaknRoll> (access date: 6.01.2014).

<sup>26</sup> See: <https://www.facebook.com/PolskaAkcjaHumanitarna> (access date: 6.01.2014).

<sup>27</sup> Regarding the Rak'n'Roll Foundation, this number is over 200 people.

<sup>28</sup> Hess 2013, p. 259–300; Pacut 2006, p. 73–96.

Foundation completely realizes a basic principle of marketing – an organization concentrates on a target group, encourages people to act and by voicing its ideas and activities informs about and disseminates its mission. The organization promotes life as a value and at the same time as a reward. “Crush Cancer. Win Life” is a motto which meets all the demands of a good advertising slogan. It contains contact, a reward, activity, and it is easy to remember.<sup>29</sup> With the “Win Life” slogan, the Foundation promotes a specific life style, an alternative vision for those sick with cancer.

The Foundation successfully employs Internet tools of communication. Its web page as well as its profile on the greatest social media portals, above all the popular fanpage on Facebook, are used to good effect by the Foundation as both one and two-way means of communication. At the same time, the Rak’n’Roll Foundation appreciates the media and its power in influencing society. Positive relations with journalists and media recognition are high priorities the organization’s communications strategy. The Foundation attempts, in many ways, to call the media’s attention to the campaigns it organizes. First of all, by enlisting the aid of celebrities, who support specific actions. Second, the Foundation’s operating style is conducive to mustering people around it, who in spite of their debilitating illness, are not afraid of cameras and the public, and will even gladly publicize their problems in order to help others. In this sense the Foundation has become useful for journalists seeking characters for their media material. In addition, journalists often identify with their characters, and later, on their own initiative, begin to support the Foundation. Finally, Rak’n’Roll provides them with cyclic activities, which occur at the same time of year, every year, which “friendly” journalists have already jotted down in their calendars. This means that representatives of the Foundation, or doctors working with them, are invited to make comments in the media also when events occur that related to their activities, when a certain type of medicine is added to, or taken away from, a list of different types of medicine, whose cost for the consumer is refunded by the state. In addition, the Foundation systematically supplies journalists with press releases and visual materials for the campaigns conducted by it, promoting health or commenting on the world of medicine, law or politics, which may have an influencing in proving or worsening the quality of life of those sick with cancer. By the same token, the Foundation appears in the media not only as an NGO promoting health and aiding the sick, but also appears as an expert in the field of communicating about health.

The increasing level of professionalization of the communications strategies of NGOs has resulted in their being more visible in the public sphere and more recognizable by society as a whole. Specific organizations have become leaders of public opinion in their fields of activity. In this context, it is essential to observe these entities belonging to the third sector, through the prism of the function performed by them in the system. It is worth asking the question as to whether

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<sup>29</sup> Andresen 2007, p. 158.



a specific NGO Rather supports the system (*support*) that is, does it authenticate it by participating in the civic dialogue on an institutional level, or does it rather, not participate in it, and remain beyond the institutional sphere of politics? In this context, the position taken by the NGO elite in the public sphere is also important. The question in this instance is: Do NGOs rather express demands made on the system, without any desire to take up a dialogue, or do they present alternative, in relation to the proportion of the authorities, solutions, and are they at the same time disposed to discuss them?

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