

**REPORT:****PULL THE EMERGENCY BRAKE  
ON HATE SPEECH AGAINST ROMA****ZASTOPUJ HEJT  
PRZECIW ROMOM****HATE SPEECH is...**

In the interview given in March 2006 for "PRESS", Polish journalist, Ryszard Kapuscinski, made an observation that in the modern world war starts with a change in the language<sup>1</sup>. Suddenly, casual news coverage starts to apply hate speech. Stereotypes are in use. Instantly invectives and verbal aggression appear. The real war seems to be just a matter of time.

Or, in other words:

„Hate speech, as defined by the Council of Europe, covers all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including: intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin.”<sup>2</sup>

**EXAMPLES: strategies of counteracting hate speech in other countries**

Throughout the program we have been exposed to a wide repertoire of diverse ideas and so-called *good practices* which turned out successful in other countries and other socio-cultural contexts. Drawing conclusions from these examples, we learned that the most powerful are the campaigns that take short time to notice yet stay in the audience's hearts for a long time. A good campaign must include information in concise form and a call and instruction for immediate action. Important to bear in mind is the fact that nowadays an average person is bombed with images and stories from all

<sup>1</sup> Translation from "Gdy się zbada konflikty międzynarodowe czy wewnętrzne, okaże się, że zawsze zaczynają się one od zmiany języka. Język normalnej informacji zaczyna w takich sytuacjach nabierać słów wrogich, agresywnych. Zaczyna się posługiwać stereotypami. By przeanalizować konflikt na Bałkanach, nie trzeba wcale znać historii regionu. Wystarczy prześledzić prasę jugosłowiańską tamtego czasu. Najpierw z podręczników do literatury usuwa się nazwisko jakiegoś pisarza, bo był Serbem albo Chorwatem. Nagle pojawiają się obelgi i słowna agresja. Prawdziwa wojna zaczyna się potem."

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org/>

possible quarters almost constantly. Because of that, we believe that a successful message is the one that stays with us after we close our eyes, ready to fall asleep.

There have been many examples worth attention. The World Wide Fund (WWF) should definitely be mentioned in the context of the use of powerful images in their campaigns – the advertisements send a silent shout to the viewer. On the other hand, the growing importance of *guerilla activism* should not pass unnoticed. The campaigns we liked most were those interacting with the surroundings, such as those enlisted at Actipedia.

Last but not least, the campaign “Israel loves Iran” deserves special attention. Launched by an Israeli graphic designer, Roni Edry, the campaign counteracts the omnipresent politics of fear and hate speech with which the Israeli mass-media feed the general public. Roni came up with a FB page and a short movie in which he explained his cause. The FB page is interactive: everyone can send a picture of themselves with the loving message towards Iran. Roni set up a kickstarter account and within a single month collected not \$7,000 but \$28,000, reaching mostly Israelis fed up with emotional paralysis. The money has been used for promotion of the cause and no-hate workshops.

To sum up, our group agreed that our campaign will be concise, to-the-point and of guerilla character as that seemed to be the most successful choice given our resources.

## **OBSERVATIONS: memes and what they can change**

Thanks to cognitive studies and their marriage to neuroscience, the concept of memes has been discovered and soon “borrowed” from by other spheres of life, including advertisement. A meme is “an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture.”<sup>3</sup>

As visible, memes act like secret agents in our mind, playing on our most innate responses and emotionality. A meme stays with us, in our memory, for much longer than other images as it becomes a part of our web of associations. Therefore, an attempt to create a meme is really an attempt to “hack” initial associations of a viewer. Much

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<sup>3</sup> Meme. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/meme>)

change might be done in this way since those are images – and our emotional responses to them – that stay in our memory longer than anything else.

The idea to create a successful meme was our aim and inspiration. While on a train, Arne Semsrott noticed an emergency brake and that is how the initial project of the sticker and campaign came upon (discussed in more detail below). When the stickers were ready and displayed in public, we noticed that they draw people's attention. Since we spread the memes mostly in the areas where people were waiting or had nothing else to do, they seem curious about the mysterious QR code which later led them to scan it and check the online page.

### **WHAT IS THE PROBLEM:**

Hate speech against Roma is an alarming problem in Poland. While hate speech against other minority groups in the country is virulent as well, derogatory comments against Roma often are not even seen as a form of violence by both perpetrators and the social institutions representatives.

According to the study carried out by prof. Michał Bilewicz<sup>4</sup>, those are the Roma who suffer the most from the hate speech in Poland at the moment and who are in a way neglected by social institutions. The community is heavily stigmatized by negative stereotypes and there is no voice or space given to them. There is no public debate concerning their situation. Given the above, the stereotypes are taken as an accurate depiction of the reality by the Poles. In such a situation, the hate speech incidents pass unnoticed and, if reported, unprosecuted.

### **THE EMERGENCY BREAK:**

Hate speech is only the first step on a path that leads to deepening social exclusion. Every violence against ethnic groups is rooted in hate speech. That is why we have to stop it, right here, right now!

As we mentioned above, we wanted to create a meme the message of which would be clear and concise. Since it is a symbol for the urgency and seriousness of this issue, we have chosen an emergency brake, the type which can be easily found in public transportation and which every individual can pull to stop even the fastest train. This is

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.ngofund.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/raport\\_final\\_poj.pdf](http://www.ngofund.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/raport_final_poj.pdf)

also what we hoped for our campaign to achieve – to stop the hate speech by informing people about the problem.

## **OUR CAMPAIGN:**

In order to connect the opportunities of an online campaign with guerilla activism, we decided to both create a website and a sticker campaign for the outdoors. Thus, we could intervene in the space where hate speech is virulent - the city - and invite our audience to take up the action by pulling a virtual brake.

While on the website, people interested in the topic are provided with clear statistics on discrimination against Roma. Not much text, just most shocking findings below which the visitors can find links to more information. Moreover, there is a possibility to report hate speech and act against it.

The visitor stats show that our stickers have been quite successful as the number of viewings increase every day. Although the FB fanpage could have been a great support to the action, due to the short period of time during which we, as a group, could admin the campaign, we decided to focus only on the website which will surely outlive our team. To ensure happy future of the website, we have contacted a number of NGOs offering them the remaining stickers and the design and the website itself. Two of the NGOs responded enthusiastically, namely Kampania Bez Nienawiści and Związek Romów Polskich.

## **THE WEBSITE**

The first page displays an emergency brake, accompanied by a caption about hate speech: “Hate Speech against Roma is discrimination. It is the first step leading to social exclusion and violence. Stop hate before it is too late. Pull the brake for more information.”

The second page contains four statistics on discrimination against Roma in Poland (taken from a European Union report), links to more information on their history and living conditions in Poland and to more information about the hate speech:

“1) Every fourth Roma has experienced hate speech in the last 12 month, every fifth Roma has experienced a hate crime. On average four such cases are reported.

2) 62 % of the Polish Roma have experienced discrimination within the last 12 months. Only 1 % of non-Roma experienced discrimination because of their ethnicity.

3) Every third Roma in Poland have experienced discrimination at work and every fifth at school.

4) 86 % of the Roma don't know where to look for help in cases of discrimination.”




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## HEJTOWANIE TO PASKUDNA SPRAWA.

Hejtowanie, czyli mowa nienawidzi, istnieje w Polsce od dawna. To forma dyskryminacji, która może prowadzić do agresji, obrażeń i przemocy. Prowadzi na nie elektronicznymi, czyli gwałtami czy pobiciami, zaczyna się właśnie od hejtowania. Mowa nienawidzi to tylko pierwszy krok, czasem najłatwiejszy do zrealizowania. Zastopujmy hejt już teraz!



Co czwarty Rom pak i kara mowy nienawidzi przetrzymuje raz w ciągu ostatniego roku, a co piąty oferuje pomocpakowi ze ze resorwim (napęci, pogrozki oraz rękawice). Wykazać z nich wywołania śledztwo i przypadki takich incydentów.



63% paków Romów doświadczyło dyskryminacji w ciągu ostatniego roku. Do paków, tylko 1% reakcji Policji znalazło się w takiej sytuacji.



Co trzeci Rom w Polsce doświadczył dyskryminacji w miejscu pracy, a co piąty dyskryminacji w szkole.



86% ankietowanych Romów nie wie, gdzie szukać pomocy.  
(Źródło: badania IFA i Olszki Europejskiego instytutu antydyskryminacji z 2016)

## ZASTOPUJ HEJT PRZECIWKO ROMOM!

Czym jest mowa nienawidzi?  
Dowiedz się więcej o Romach w Polsce  
Kampania Bez Nienawidzi!  
Zgłoś hejt  
Jeśli masz jakies komentarze, opinie, treści używajcie #zastopujhejt.

### THE STICKERS

In order to promote the website and to intervene in the public space, we produced stickers portraying the emergency brake above the caption „Stop hate against Roma“ and a link and the QR code to the website. The stickers can be found in several public places in Warsaw. Since it would be illegal to put them up in public transport, all stickers in buses we have removed all the stickers displayed in the buses.



## THE OUTCOMES

To our great pleasure we found out that our stickers drew people's attention – and even more than that: people in general would scan the QR code and presumably see our page. Therefore, our aim was partly achieved – people became familiar with the issue and hopefully will be more alert and mindful about it in the future.

On a more personal level, each of us learnt how to plan and manage a short-term yet powerful social campaign. In fact, it was an important and enriching experience which resulted in many ideas and inspirations. At the moment, each of us is planning our own actions and the skills we acquired throughout the workshop laid the basis for our future undertakings. The most important lesson is that each person can bring a change – even with a limited budget and with little time. There are simply no reasons not to act when we witness injustice.

We found that the following practices are worthy a recommendation:

- the meme stickers with the QR code draw the attention of passers-by; moreover, they play on people's curiosity and that is a sign of a successful meme;

- the minimalist website which provides moving statistics and a couple of links responds to people's limited attention span and a need for the information provided in a concise and clear form;

However, we would also recommend to reinforce the campaign with a FB fanpage as this channel turned out to be very successful for other groups. In general, people are keen to "like" and get involved into social campaigns through Facebook.

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