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Application of social media in political communication of local leaders in election processes (on the example of Facebook's use by mayors of voivodship cities in Poland in the 2010 election campaign)

Introduction

The use of social media in the processes of political communication is a more and more popular phenomenon worldwide and in Poland but it is also a phenomenon that is developing quite unevenly and its development is dependent on various factors: Internet access, age or education of users or even communication habits and preferences. More often than not the role of the new media is situated in the literature as an alternative communication tool comparing to traditional media – press, radio or television. But growing interest in the new media at the same time points to their other, more important meaning than merely an alternative for information conveyed in journalists' reports. In countries of the so-called "young European democracy", i.e. countries of Central and Eastern Europe where the democratic system is relatively new, existing only for about twenty years, the processes of shaping civic habits, which are essential for proper functioning of democracy, are still underway. They include the need for political communication, as the right "to know" and effectively take electoral decisions. More and more often, the so-called new media are becoming the subject of political or sociological analyses, as a place where it is possible to exchange source information, to create public debate, also political, as well as to build communities capable of achieving common good. Communication possibilities that appear thanks to the existence of the new media are emphasised, such as web pages, social websites or blogs, with special attention paid to their role in political communication in election processes. The presented data come from research into the use of a certain social medium – Facebook – in

processes of political communication in Poland held by local leaders – mayors of 16 voivodship cities. The data confirm general tendencies that social media constitute a new tool but at the same time they create a new platform for public debate. However, their effective use requires changes in attitudes both among politicians, by using communication processes for holding a dialogue with the surroundings and not only making one-way announcements, and among citizens who should use these media to engage in carrying out public tasks. An important issue in the researched context is looking for relationships between the activity of the local leader in social media and the achieved election results and the use of the new media for debate with the surroundings during tenure and during election campaign. The last element that was subject to analysis in the study was the relationship between the leader's activity in the new media and voter turnout, treated as the measure of political participation of local community. Therefore the role of the new media in encouraging political participation emphasised in literature devoted to political communication was also subject to analysis in this research.

Research methodology

The research was carried out between 5 and 8 May 2011 with the quantitative method, by quantitative measurements made in the most popular Polish social website, Facebook. The criterion of popularity of the website (currently about 600 million users worldwide and over 5 million in Poland) was the criterion of choice of this medium for research, other social media available in Poland not being so popular. The subject of measurement were personal profiles or fan pages of mayors of voivodship cities (16 cities) in Poland, profiles of cities managed by these mayors or cities where they won the election, as well as the analysis of activity (measured with the number of published pieces of information) on the mayors' profiles or on their fan pages during tenure and in the election period. The subject of the study was also establishing to what extent city profiles are used by politicians running these cities for their own election campaigns. This was justified for a few reasons: unlimited tenure, leading to possible abuse, using tools that are not directly identified as election tools in campaigns, low competences of Polish citizens for controlling politicians' abuse in election campaigns. Another issue that was subject to research

was establishing whether local politicians take part in discussions that are held in connection with the publication of news on their profiles or fan pages. This part of research was quantitative and was based on analysis of news published in the research periods. The research encompassed two periods – the first was the week of 1–6 May 2011, when politicians' communication activity through profiles or fan pages during tenure was analysed, the other analysed period was the week preceding the election to mayoral positions that took place on 21 November 2010. Research concerning mayors' activity on city profiles was carried out in the same periods. The last table contains details about the elected mayors i.e. how long they ran the cities (in Poland mayors may serve unlimited tenures), whether they represented political parties or were independent candidates endorsed by local organisations, whether they were elected in the first or second round and with what result, and finally what the voter turnout was.

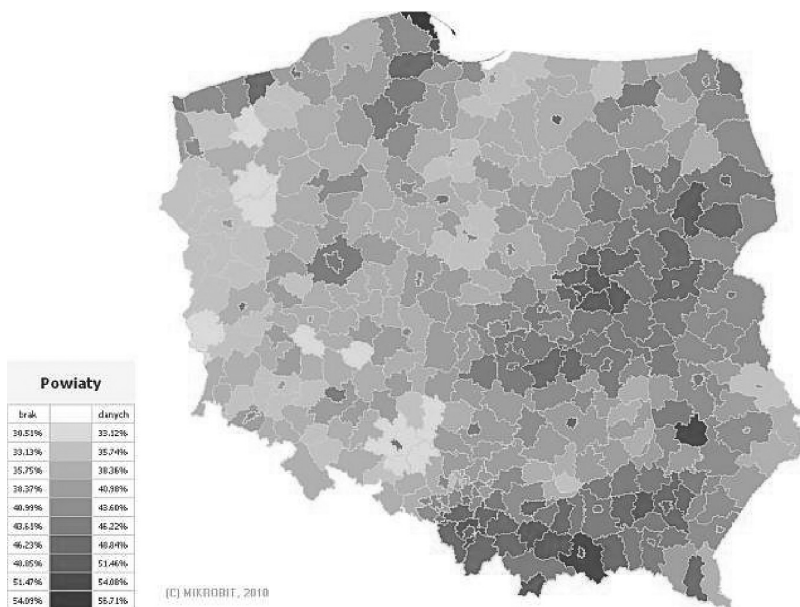
Hypotheses that were adopted in the study were as follows:

1. A mayor's communication through Facebook does not have an important impact on election processes because due to the quality of communication voters do not shape their opinions on the basis of a candidate's Facebook activity;
2. Mayors do not use their profiles or fan pages for regular debate concerning local issues, their activity increases in the pre-election period;
3. Facebook profiles of cities whose mayors seek re-election are used for election campaign of the mayor.

The carried out analysis of data gathered during the research also accounted for the access of Poles to the Internet and distribution of this access on the map of Poland¹.

The map presents voter turnout in Poland in 2010, which, as can be noticed, is distributed almost inversely proportional to Internet access. In the south-western part and northern part there is the best Internet access and at the same time lower voter turnout and it is the other way round in eastern and in south-eastern Poland.

¹ <http://www.mapa.uke.gov.pl/mapa1/>. This map shows that Internet access in Poland is geographically varied, which means that access depends e.g. on place of residence. The analysis of the map indicates an uneven access to the Internet. In the south-western part of Poland there is a much better access to the Internet than in the eastern part, where the access is on average at the level of 10–30%.



Source: <http://wyborcza.pl/51,76842,8098821.html?i=0>.

Joint analysis of these two maps – of Internet access and voter turnout – juxtaposed with the list of cities, whose mayors use Facebook (below, Table 1), enable drawing the conclusion that a better Internet access does not mean greater activity of mayors of voivodship cities in using Facebook. An example may be the Mayor of Katowice, a city located in the Silesia Metropolis, which has one of the highest indexes of Internet access but communication of the Katowice Mayor through Facebook is rather symbolic, similarly to the mayors of Wrocław or Poznań – cities located in western part of Poland.

Research results

The results of research presented below have been grouped in tables, to facilitate their analysis. The first table, presented below, presents data concerning cities and their mayors in the context of their fan pages or own Facebook profiles. 11 out of 16 mayors have fan pages, but 4 of them have only their biographical notes on them and one mayor (the Mayor of Katowice) has a fan page, but without any content. The average number of

friends of mayors who have fan pages and publish information there is 1895 people. A slightly lower number of mayors have their own Facebook profiles, i.e. 9. Two profiles out of them (of Opole and Wrocław mayors) are practically unused. Five mayors have both fan pages and their own profiles. Two women are among the most active mayors in this communication: the mayors of Warsaw and Łódź.

Table 1
Profiles and fan pages of mayors of voivodship cities (data as of 5 May 2011)

No	City and its mayor (alphabetical order)	Fan page – number of friends /contents	Own profile – number of friends
1.	Białystok – Tadeusz Truskolaski	40 (contents – bio)	None
2.	Bydgoszcz – Rafał Bruski	37 (contents – bio)	3374
3.	Gdańsk – Paweł Adamowicz	1549 (contents – information)	None
4.	Katowice – Piotr Uszok	59 (no content)	813
5.	Kielce – Wojciech Lubawski	None	None
6.	Kraków – Jacek Majchrowski	None	2939
7.	Lublin – Krzysztof Żuk	1605 (contents – information)	None
8.	Łódź – Hanna Zdanowska	1038 (contents – information)	3064
9.	Olsztyn – Piotr Grzymowicz	None	1527
10.	Opole – Ryszard Zembaczyński	None	12
11.	Poznań – Ryszard Grobelny	31 (contents – bio)	None
12.	Rzeszów – Tadeusz Ferenc	None	None
13.	Szczecin – Piotr Krzystek	158 (contents – information)	1641
14.	Warszawa – Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz	5339 (contents – information)	4981
15.	Wrocław – Rafał Dutkiewicz	1681 (contents – information)	11
16.	Zielona Góra – Janusz Kubicki	5 (contents – bio)	None

The data presented above show lack of uniform and coherent policy of communication through Facebook by mayors of voivodship cities. Variety is visible both as far as it goes for having a profile or a fan page and for the way of communication through Facebook.

Table 2 presents communication of voivodship cities through social media, i.e. through fan pages of cities on Facebook. Data obtained in the course of the research reveal that only 8 cities have their own profiles, 2 out of which are not directly linked to the city's website (they do not have the fb icon on the city hall's website, through which we can directly access the city's profile on Facebook). The profiles are, however,

marked as official. It turns out that mayors of voivodship cities communicate through Facebook more often than services responsible for the city's communication. Having the city profile and at the same time communication of the mayor take up various configurations. There are cities that do not communicate with residents through Facebook but the mayors are active with their own fan pages or profiles – e.g. Warszawa, Bydgoszcz, Lublin, Szczecin. There are also cities where neither the mayor nor the services carry out communication through Facebook – e.g. Opole, Rzeszów, Zielona Góra, Białystok. The mayors of two cities (Wrocław and Poznań) with a considerable number of friends on their Facebook profiles (as compared to other cities) – on average 26,500 people, are not at all (Poznań) or only slightly active on their own fan pages (the Mayor of Poznań published only his own biography, and the Mayor of Wrocław actually made his own fan page available to publish information by other people).

Table 2

Official profiles of voivodship cities on Facebook (data as of 8 May 2011)

No	Voivodship city	Official city profile on Facebook – number of fans	Link between profile and City Hall's (CH) website
1.	Białystok	None	–
2.	Bydgoszcz	None	–
3.	Gdańsk	Exists – 6943	Link between profile and CH's website
4.	Katowice	Exists – 5036	No link between profile and CH's website, but profile marked as official city's website
5.	Kielce	Exists – 1080	Link between profile and CH's website
6.	Kraków	Exists – 7420	Link between profile and CH's website
7.	Lublin	None	–
8.	Łódź	Exists – 2176	Link between profile and CH's website
9.	Olsztyn	Exists – 390	Link between profile and CH's website
10.	Opole	None	–
11.	Poznań	Exists – 21,523	No link between profile and CH's website, but profile marked as official city's website
12.	Rzeszów	None	–
13.	Szczecin	None	–
14.	Warszawa	None	–
15.	Wrocław	Exists – 31,491	Link between profile and CH's website
16.	Zielona Góra	None	–

Juxtaposition of data in these two tables indicates that both in Polish voivodship cities and in the case of mayors of these cities there is lack of uniform and coherent communication policy concerning Facebook. Some local leaders put emphasis on this form of communication while some completely ignore it. The analysis of using Facebook by cities looks similar. Data presented below show content of information published on profiles or fan pages and determine whether the engagement of mayors in political communication with residents through Facebook has influence on the obtained election results.

Table 3 presents data concerning the activity of mayors on their fan pages as regards the number of published information during tenure (1–6 May 2011), content of information (taking into consideration the division into

Table 3

Analysis of the content of fan pages of mayors during tenure

No	Mayor/number of friends	Activity – number of information pieces published in a week (1–6.05.2011) /number of posts	Content of information – concerning city or person	Discussion or assessment of information published by mayor – does he or she participate in discussion?
1.	Gdańsk – Paweł Adamowicz/1549	12/71	Information about the city, activity of authorities, sometimes private information (1 piece in the research period)	Discussion – mayor actively participates in it Yes – 12 mayor's comments to people's posts
2.	Lublin – Krzysztof Żuk/1605	0 – last post of 23 February 2011, previous of 24 December 2010	–	–
3.	Łódź – Hanna Zdąnowska/1038	4/14	Information on the city and activity of authorities	Discussion – no posts by the mayor
4.	Szczecin – Piotr Krzystek/158	0 – last post 22 April 2011	–	–
5.	Warszawa – Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz/5339	2/13	Information on the city and activity of authorities	Discussion – no posts by the mayor
6.	Wrocław – Rafał Dutkiewicz/1681	6/6 – mayor makes profile available for publication of Internet users' posts	Information on the city and activity of authorities – most information is linked from other websites	Discussion – no posts by the mayor

information concerning the city hall, the city or personal information), the number of posts and activity of the mayor in discussion, which takes place after publication of information on his or her fan page. The research has shown that the most active mayor as regards communication but also the one who best uses his own fan page for building a platform for discussion he also participates in, is the Mayor of Gdańsk. Two mayors (of Lublin and Szczecin) did not communicate through their fan pages in the research period at all. Also, all mayors having fan pages, who in the research period communicated with residents through them, except for the Mayor of Gdańsk, only published information concerning the city and their city hall's activity, but the Mayor of Gdańsk also posted information concerning his personal matters but it should be emphasised that this was rather exceptional and concerned only 1 piece of information. The above table presenting activity of mayors on their fan pages, similarly to previous tables reveals lack of regularity in publishing information, lack of mayors' participation in debate started after publishing information or treating the fan page as an additional carrier for already published information.

As pointed out in the methodology, the analysis of contents was carried out in two periods of activity of mayors on their fan pages, during tenure and in the pre-election period, in order to compare if the activity increases in the pre-election period or remains the same. Increased activity would mean that a fan page is used as a tool of political communication in election processes. Table no. 3 presents activity of these mayors who have fan pages during tenure and the above table, no. 4, presents activity of mayors on their fan pages in the pre-election week (15–19 November 2010 – the election took place on 21 November 2011). Juxtaposition of data points to a considerably higher activity on fan pages of mayors of: Gdańsk, Warszawa and Lublin. The Mayor of Gdańsk is also active on his fan page during tenure, but in the case of mayors of Warszawa and Lublin, higher political communication activity can be clearly seen, manifesting itself in the number of published pieces of information but also in a change of attitude towards participation in a discussion which is held in response to published information. This means that in the case of mayors of Warsaw and Lublin, Facebook may be regarded as a tool used rather for election communication than for permanent political communication with voters. In the case of other mayors, no changes in carrying out political communication through own fan pages were observed in the pre-election period.

Table 4

Analysis of mayors' activity on fan pages during election campaign

No	Mayor	Activity – number of information pieces published in a week (15–19.11.2010) /number of posts	Content of information – concerning the city or election campaign program	Discussion or assessment of information published by mayor – does mayor or candidate participate in discussion?
1.	Gdańsk – Paweł Adamowicz	26/104	Election campaign	Discussion – mayor's participation – 14 posts, open discussions with opponents, explaining decisions taken by authorities
2.	Lublin – Krzysztof Żuk	11/25	Election campaign	Discussion – mayor's participation – 3 posts to own information and 4 to others' information – discussions with opponents and responding to voters' questions
3.	Łódź – Hanna Zdanowska	2	Election campaign	No interaction in connection with the presented information
4.	Szczecin – Piotr Krzystek	3	Election campaign	No interaction in connection with the presented information, there are questions about election promises left unanswered
5.	Warszawa – Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz	39/314	Election campaign	Discussion – mayor's participation – 3 posts
6.	Wrocław – Rafał Dutkiewicz	6/8	City's promotion	Discussion, no participation by mayor

Table 5

Analysis of mayors' activity on their own profiles (during tenure and during election campaign)

No	Mayor/ number of friends	Information concerning city hall/election campaign/private/political	Mayor's participation in discussion on 1–6.05.2011/ number of information pieces/number of posts	Type of activity in election campaign – research in the period 15–19.11.2011
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Bydgoszcz – Rafał Bruski/3347	Political/private	Yes – 6 – 4/175	Information about election campaign Number of info pieces – 5 Number of posts – 39 Participation in discussion – 5

1	2	3	4	5
2.	Katowice – Piotr Uszok/813	Concerning city hall/makes wall available to other people	No – 1	Information about election campaign Number of info pieces – 1 Number of posts – 0 Participation in discussion – 2 (to info pieces published by others)
3.	Kraków – Jacek Majchrowski/2939	Concerning city hall/makes wall available to other people	No – 4/17	Information about election campaign Number of info pieces – 25 Number of posts – 110 Participation in discussion – 6
4.	Łódź – Hanna Zdanowska/3064	Concerning city hall	No – 2/13	Information about election campaign Number of info pieces – 10 Number of posts – 29 Participation in discussion – 2
5.	Olsztyn – Piotr Grzymowicz/1527	Concerning city hall/makes wall available to other people	No – 10/1	Information about election campaign Number of info pieces – 1 Number of posts – 7 Participation in discussion – 0
6.	Opole – Ryszard Zembańczyński	Active only on 2–3.11 and 2.12.2010.	No	No activity
7.	Szczecin – Piotr Krzystek/1641	Concerning city hall	No – 1/3	Information about election campaign Number of info pieces – 31 Number of posts – 290 Participation in discussion – 2
9.	Warszawa – Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz/4981	Concerning city hall/makes wall available to other people	No	
10.	Wrocław – Rafał Dutkiewicz/11	No data	–	No data

The above Table number 5 presents the activity of mayors on their own profiles during tenure (1–6 May 2011) and during the pre-election week (15–19 November 2010). Mayors of the following cities actively communicate with residents through their own profiles: Białystok, Łódź, Kraków and Szczecin, and mayors of Kraków, Łódź or Szczecin intensified their communication in the last week before the election, as compared to communication during tenure. Only the Mayor of Bydgoszcz took part in debates taking place after publishing information on his profile in both

analysed periods, while the mayors of: Kraków, Katowice, Łódź and Szczecin took part in such debates only in the pre-election period. During tenure their activity was lower and also no participation in debates was noticed. It should also be added that the analysis of content published on mayors' own profiles indicates that the information concerns city halls. And this means that mayors should run fan pages as public figures and not profiles that are intended for publishing private information.

Table 6

Pre-election promotion of mayors on fan pages of city halls

No	City	Number of information per week 1–6 May 2011	Total number of posts to information/average number of posts to information	Promotion of mayor on the city's fan page – in the period from 15 to 19.11.2010
1.	Gdańsk	35 (wall is not available to others)	142/4.06	No election promotion of current mayor – published information concerns culture, sport and tourism
2.	Katowice	11 (wall is available to others)	56/5.09	No election promotion of current mayor – published information about culture, the European Capital of Culture project, events in the city
3.	Kielce	23 (wall is not available to others)	101/4.39	There was no profile during the campaign; it was created on 2 April 2011
4.	Kraków	13 (wall is not available to others)	24/1.85	Published information about the city, culture, but also activity of the current mayor and simultaneously a candidate in the election.
5.	Łódź	10 (wall is available to others)	10/1	Published information about investments, culture, education. There are two entries concerning voting for a city council candidate (published by this candidate)
6.	Olsztyn	4 (wall is not available to others)	6/1.5	Profile launched on 30.12.2010.
7.	Poznań	14 (wall is not available to others)		No election promotion of current mayor. Published information concerning the city, investments, sport, culture.
8.	Wrocław	41 (wall is not available to others)	583/14.22	There are two pieces of information concerning participation of the current mayor in the election, 3 pieces about illegal distribution of leaflets in the city. Also information about sport, investments, culture.

The above table presents some regularities. First, there are different levels of activity of voivodship city halls in communication through fan pages; starting from very active city halls, like Wrocław, Gdańsk or Kielce to cities occasionally communicating through their own fan page, like Olsztyn, Łódź, Katowice, Poznań or Kraków. Another regularity important from the point of view of election processes is not using fan pages of city halls for promoting current mayors and at the same time candidates in election. In two cases – of Kraków and Wrocław –there occurred publications of election information concerning acting mayors, what can be regarded as abuse, considering that in a situation when a candidate seeks re-election, election activities should be separated from serving tenure, but there were occasional. This makes it possible to challenge one of the adopted hypotheses – that fan pages of cities are used for election promotion of mayors seeking re-election.

Table 7

Election information concerning mayors, election results and voter turnout

No	City and mayor	Political representation or independent candidate	Since when in power	Voter turnout	Elected in first or second round	Result
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Białystok – Tadeusz Truskolaski	independent	2006	41.77%	1st round	68.53%
2.	Bydgoszcz – Rafał Bruski	Civic Platform	2010	33.95%	2nd round	59.17%
3.	Gdańsk – Paweł Adamowicz	Civic Platform	1998	39.69%	1st round	53.74%
4.	Katowice – Piotr Uszok	independent	1998	39.36%	1st round	51.71%
5.	Kielce – Wojciech Lubawski	independent	2002	44.73%	1st round	58.66%
6.	Kraków – Jacek Majchrowski	independent	2002	35.37%	2nd round	59.55%
7.	Lublin – Krzysztof Żuk	Civic Platform	2010	32.01%	2nd round	54.65%
8.	Łódź – Hanna Zdanowska	Civic Platform	2010	22.34%	2nd round	60.65%
9.	Olsztyn – Piotr Grzymowicz	independent	2009	43.65%	2nd round	53.28%
10.	Opole – Ryszard Zembaczyński	Civic Platform	2002	25.84%	2nd round	51.30%
11.	Poznań – Ryszard Grobelny	independent	1998	24.75%	2nd round	66.26%

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12.	Rzeszów – Tadeusz Ferenc	Democratic Left Alliance	2002	51.72%	1st round	53.50%
13.	Szczecin – Piotr Krzystek	independent	2006	25.82%	2nd round	61.42%
14.	Warszawa – Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz	Civic Platform	2006	47.96%	1st round	53.67%
15.	Wrocław – Rafał Dutkiewicz	independent	2002	39.15%	1st round	71.62%
16.	Zielona Góra – Janusz Kubicki	Democratic Left Alliance	2006	43.39%	1st round	64.87%

We can divide mayors in the biggest Polish cities – voivodship cities – into two groups. Mayors endorsed by political parties (Civic Platform – 6 mayors and Democratic Left Alliance – 2 mayors) and independent mayors – 8 mayors. According to data presented in Table 7 in the context of Table no. 1, independent mayors more often create their own profiles. Exceptions in this group are two woman mayors: of Warsaw and Łódź, who have profiles and fan pages and the Mayor of Bydgoszcz – all endorsed by Civic Platform. Other mayors are independent. Mayors who are members of a political party – Civic Platform – more often have fan pages. Among 5 mayors communicating via fan pages, only the mayor of Wrocław is not a member of a political party. The above table also shows which mayor has received greatest support in the first round of election – this group includes mayors of Wrocław, Białystok, Zielona Góra and Kielce. In this group only the mayor of Wrocław has his own fan page but he does not communicate through it but makes it available to other users to present information there. Another group of mayors with a slightly lower support received in the first round are mayors of Gdańsk, Katowice, Rzeszów or Warszawa. All mayors in this group, except for the mayor of Rzeszów communicate through fan pages or own Facebook profile. This data confirms that political communication carried out by local politicians through Facebook is not an important element of political communication. In the analysis there appears another element which is worth emphasising, i.e. the influence of Facebook activity of the mayors and at the same time candidates on voter turnout. Research shows that the highest voter turnout was in Rzeszów (51.72%), Warsaw (47.96%), Kielce (44.73%), Olsztyn (43.65%), Zielona Góra (43.39%), Białystok (41.77%). In this group, only mayors of Warsaw and Olsztyn carry out political communication through Facebook. Additionally, as mentioned before during presentation of voter

turnout map, mayors communicating through Facebook do not have higher voter turnout.

Conclusions

Research results presented above are subject to analysis in the context of role which is attributed to the new media in the processes of political communication. Research carried out in Poland on the most popular social website – Facebook – revealed a few regularities. Communication of mayors of voivodship cities who use Facebook is carried out quite irregularly, intensifying during election processes. Mayors are not interested in participation in discussions held after publication of information by them, what is the evidence that Facebook activity is not treated as an attempt to build a platform for public debate. Some mayors do not use Facebook at all, not having profiles or fan pages or having them and making them available to others to publish information there. Even less interest is shown by voivodship cities, only half of which have fan pages. Election campaign of mayors seeking re-election is not carried out on fan pages of cities. Such cases were observed only occasionally and exclusively in the cases of mayors of Krakow and Wrocław. It seems that the carried out research confirms that the experiences of Polish politicians concerning Facebook communication are similar to those in other countries, where using the Internet and the new media also has more and more followers.

Analysing research results that was carried out into political communication with the use of the new media, including social websites, in other countries it can be stated that their role is still not particularly important as compared to traditional media (press, radio and particularly television), but is growing relatively quickly. Jan van Dijk emphasises that in the last twenty years, democratic potential of the new media has been praised, that they were to enhance the position of citizens to enable rebirth of direct democracy, making participation more common. Van Dijk writes: “Digital democracy makes possible fuller and better information about political processes and government policy, holding public debate on-line and bigger, direct participation of citizens in decision making”².

² J. van Dijk, *Social Aspects of New Media*, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2010, p. 138.

A similar view is shared by Castells, who emphasises the use of electronic mail as a tool of political propaganda – a tool of mass dissemination of a directed political message³. But Castells also points to using other tools of Internet communication in election processes – creating websites by candidates but also making attempts at encouraging, particularly local communities to Internet debate around local problems, what besides creating a platform for exchange of opinions also serves self-organisation of citizens and creating communities, that may be weak but are still communities, whose activity constitutes a form of aggregating local social capital⁴.

Another important element emphasising the role of social media is their function in increasing participation of people in political debate and direct exchange of political views. Research that has so far been carried out and that is quoted by e.g. van Dijk, has not confirmed the thesis that social media and the Internet cause greater participation in debate or interactivity. Usually, participation in discussion on a given subject is aimed at taking advantage of the opportunity to speak one's mind on a given subject or commenting on interlocutors' opinions. However, this does not influence the element which is important in debates held traditionally, namely striving for consensus, formulating conclusions, exchanging views and interacting at the same time and place. But as researchers of this field of Internet activity emphasise, an exceptionally important role of Internet media, discussion forums is activation of people and their ability to create future political communities, and therefore an alternative to today's perception of politics, community, election processes. The same argument is put forward by Castells, who writes that the Internet is a tool serving the creation and fostering of social bonds, where communication facilitates free discussion, informing local public opinion and democratic control⁵.

According to researchers of the influence of social media on the degree of engagement in politics cited by Jan van Dijk⁶, so far it has not been agreed that there is any dependence pointing that appearing and being active in the social media is reflected in the level of involvement in politics.

³ M. Castells, *The Network Society*, Wyd. Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2010, p. 391.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 389 and 391.

⁵ M. Castells, *The Network Society*, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

⁶ J. van Dijk, *Social Aspects of New Media*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Another matter is that social media have created alternative and additional sources of information – thanks to the Internet there is a possibility of gaining the information straight from the source, as well as the possibility of swift passing the information to others. Additionally, the researchers point out that just searching for the information concerning political issues, political parties or candidates is much more popular than participation in discussions, or as regards the candidates – running the election campaign on the Internet.

As van Dijk and the researchers cited by him further point out: “In the United States of America and most other countries where suitable research was carried out, in the late 1990`s approximately 10–20% of Internet users were somehow involved into some kind of political activity. More and more Internet users are using political news services. In 2002 their number in the USA reached 46 million people, or in other words – they constituted 39.4% of Internet users. In the Netherlands, 2 million people out of 7 million voters who went to the ballot box in 2002 took advantage of the Internet election guide [...]. The researchers noticed, however, that new forms of getting information and being active in politics are used much more often by well-educated people, who have previously been involved in politics”⁷.

Analysing the results of research carried out in the field of communication of voivodship city mayors in Poland in the light of results of research and analyses presented above, carried out in other countries, it may be concluded that also in the communication of Polish political leaders social media appear among the used tools, and similarly to other countries these are not yet tools used to the full. Research confirmed that profiles or fan pages of local leaders on Facebook do not create a platform for local debate, do not encourage local communities to greater participation in election, and finally they also do not extend knowledge about local problems or actions that the authorities take up, and this may be formulated as an accusation towards mayors, after analysis of the content of their profiles and fan pages. They are also not the place where activation of local communities around local problems takes place and this objective should be achieved through both communication of local leaders and administrations of cities through fan pages on Facebook. Such a role for the new media in the processes of communication is forecast by Castells who was

⁷ Ibidem, p. 153–154.

quoted above, additionally indicating that communication through social websites makes it possible to create a platform for public debate but also control necessary for the functioning of democracy, particularly in its local area. Nevertheless, as follows from the research, only half of the voivodship city halls carries out organised communication through Facebook (exclusively in Polish). Such activities may thus be the proof of a few phenomena; lack of knowledge about the possibilities that follow from such a form of communication and what is important in the global aspect, also free promotion of the city, lack of adequate reference to processes of political communication with the surroundings, particularly in the context of presenting local issues, justifying the decisions taken, explaining the existing problems that could become subject to public discussion through their public presentation. Finally, downplaying this form of activation of local community for implementation of goals that would also be possible to be achieved in reality. It seems that not taking advantage of these possibilities is becoming one of the reasons why social media, including Facebook do not cause activation in the context of political participation, taking into account low voter turnout. The researchers of the new media quoted above – van Dijk or Castells point to the relatively low influence of the new media on creating the image of politicians or activation of communities in processes of political communication but they indicate that it is a slowly changing state. This means that treating activity in the new media in the years to come may have a more and more important influence also on the processes of political communication, including election processes. Analysing political communication through Facebook and pointing to the importance of this website for processes on a both global and local scale, Mike Westling indicates that it is with this medium that politicians have the possibility of communicating with all members of the local community who are interested in listening to politicians but the same members of the local community also have the right to present their opinions connected with managing local community. Looking for justification of such a use of Facebook, Westling finds it in the definition of “public sphere” of Jurgen Habermas, treating it as a place for political communication between citizens⁸.

⁸ M. Westling, *Expanding the Public Sphere. The Impact of Facebook on Political Communication*, <http://www.mendeley.com/research/expanding-the-public-sphere-the-impact-of-facebook-on-political-communication/>.

Westling also draws attention to the possibilities provided by Facebook – using the wall (a place of publishing information) as a local bulletin, newspaper, place of informal meetings and exchange of thoughts on public matters (city hall meeting), also regardless of the place one is at. It is quite significant that all the more often discussions held through social websites are called the new Agora.

It was not the subject of the carried out research to analyse communities created on Facebook that were activated during election campaigns. Westling also writes about the role of such groups in creating possibilities of forming candidate support groups that e.g. in American campaigns organised political events or groups critically debating about the candidate or program proposed by him or her.

Challenges faced by politicians, also local, in connection with the development of communication with the use of the new media, including social websites, require change of orientation and putting proper meaning to communication as a continuing process that should constitute some kind of a dialogue with the surroundings and not a process activated in pre-election periods to use Internet media in propaganda messages. Kaja Tampere points to another element important from the point of view of political communication processes in a democratic society, namely building trust in dialogue, necessary for proper functioning of democracy⁹. It seems that acknowledging this goal – trust in those in power and decisions taken by them, as one of the basic, will at the same time make it possible to establish a proper place for communication through new media in processes of political communication in general.

**Zastosowanie mediów społecznych w komunikowaniu politycznym
lokalnych przywódców w ramach procesów wyborczych
(na przykładzie wykorzystania Facebooka przez prezydentów
miast wojewódzkich w Polsce w kampanii wyborczej w 2010 r.)**

Streszczenie

Wykorzystanie w procesach komunikacji politycznej serwisów społecznościowych (in. mediów społecznych) należy do wciąż nowych zjawisk, których rola jednak

⁹ K. Tampere, *A walk in the public relations field: Theoretical discussion from a social media and network society perspective*, "Central European Journal of Communication" 2011, no. 1[6], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, p. 59.

rośnie. Idea wykorzystania nowych mediów w komunikacji politycznej, to idea budowania płaszczyzny do interaktywnego dialogu, którego celem jest nie tylko informowanie otoczenia, ale także aktywizowanie go do prowadzenia debaty, zwłaszcza w aspekcie lokalnym. Opisane w artykule wykorzystanie Facebooka (najpopularniejszego zarówno na świecie – ok. 600 mln użytkowników, jak i w Polsce – ponad 5 mln użytkowników) serwisu społecznego w komunikacji politycznej, którą prowadzą lokalni liderzy – prezydenci miast wojewódzkich w Polsce, stanowi próbę odpowiedzi na pytanie, w jaki sposób z tego narzędzia korzystają liderzy lokalni w okresie kampanii wyborczej oraz podczas sprawowania mandatu. Dane pozyskane w badaniu potwierdzają ogólne tendencje, iż media społecznościowe stanowią nowe narzędzie, ale zarazem kreują nową płaszczyznę do publicznej debaty. Ich efektywne wykorzystanie wymaga jednak zmian postaw tak wśród samych polityków, poprzez wykorzystywanie procesów komunikacji do prowadzenia dialogu z otoczeniem a nie tylko jednostronnego nadawania komunikatów, jak i obywateli, którzy powinni wykorzystywać te media do angażowania się w realizację zadań publicznych. Istotnym w badanym kontekście jest szukanie zależności pomiędzy aktywnością lokalnego lidera w mediach społecznościowych a uzyskiwanym poparciem wyborczym oraz wykorzystywaniem nowych mediów do debaty z otoczeniem w okresie sprawowania kadencji oraz podczas kampanii wyborczej.

