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Public Dialogue Model of Political Communication in the Information Era

I. Introduction

The political system, the media system and the citizens are current issues in political sciences, but they can also be interesting for ordinary people, who – with the spread of online networks – have got further possibilities to enter the political discourse. Yet, politics have also begun to use those public digital networks, which are visited by a wider variety of citizens. The political system's opening towards online networks has become salient with the presidential campaign of *Barack Obama* in the United States in 2008 and 2012. It is expected that western-style democracies will take over some of those techniques and solutions. Therefore, it is essential to review, or if necessary, redefine the traditional literature on political communication. For doing this, one can use the literature of the past decades, that has already predicted the direction of the expected changes in the post-industrialist or the information era. Focusing on these theories, this study investigates five possible tendencies that can affect the development of political communication in the next decades.

Except for some previous theoretical works the researchers and practitioners started to classify political communication's periods and to consider the social impact of the concept in the nineties. With this, political communication has become current topic of research in communication and media studies and political sciences. One classification approach is from *Gianpietro Mazzoleni*, who wrote about the public dialogue model of political communication, which consists the political system (parliament, government, political parties, politicians, etc.), media system (print and electronic media, journalists, etc.) and citizens/voters (civilians, NGOs, voters, etc.).[1] The ongoing communication between them gives the political communication.

In the framework of social context, I will investigate the new possibilities of political communication in relation to the expected future challenges that are facing the public dialog model. In the first half of the article I will give an overview of the periods of political communication and its social impacts of the past and present; in the second half

[1] MAZZOLENI, GIANPIETRO: *La comunicazione politica*. Il Mulino, Bologna, 2004. pp. 20–21.

of the article I will examine five phenomena, which in my opinion, will be the challenges on the road to new political communication.

II. Time and social characteristics of political communication

Different features make the citizens' democracy ordinary in different countries. People are trying to catch the essence of their democracy's concept concentrated in a sentence throughout the world. They describe their own political system with adjectives like as the "world's largest democracy" in the United States, "the world's largest democracy" in India, "the world's oldest democracy" in Greece, but even in Cuba they call it "true democracy".[2]

Besides the different features in Western-style democracies the political communication also puts on various characteristics. On the other hand, due to the media, globalization, increased mobility of society and presidentialization of politics the political communication in different countries follows much more common patterns than political parties claiming the same ideology in any two countries. For this reason, the political communication researchers should examine consistently the changes observed in different countries and to create global definitions that can be true in Poland, Hungary as well as in Brazil, Germany, Spain, India or Australia. In the following section of the article I will examine the preceding conclusions of political communication analyses, which could serve as starting point if we want to examine the expected trends in the near future.

1. Time-based interpretations

Professionalized political communication's periodization lived its heyday of analysis in the second half of the nineties and in the beginning of Millennium years. The researchers were often interpret it with political campaigns, and sometimes with the media, more precisely based on the dominant medium. Therefore, the obvious solution proved to be the chronological periodization by the media, so there is the first age (post-World War II years), the second age (from the sixties) and third age (from the nineties) of political communication. The third age is the period of the news media and the internet, when, unlike to any other era, it is difficult to satisfy the consumers hunger for news.[3]

However, the political communication has its newspaper, television and digital era as well. Basically, politicians have several paths to choose from in the digital age, or the political actors adapt to the digital space, or they ask others to help them thus giving more room for political consultants.[4] Political communication's other researchers write about pre-modern, modern and post-modern campaigns, indicating that the development of political communication and political campaigns takes place simultaneously. Loyalty and personal

[2] GASTIL, JOHN: *Political Communication and Deliberation*. SAGE Publications. Los Angeles 2008. pp. 4–5.

[3] BLUMLER, JAY G. – KAVANAGH, DENNIS: *The Third Age of Political Communication: Influences and Features*. Political Communication 1999/3. pp. 211–225.

[4] FARRELL, DAVID M. – KOLODNY, ROBIN – MEDVIC, STEPHEN: *Parties and Campaign Professionals in a Digital Age*. Press/Politics 2001/4. pp. 11–30.

encounters with the voters were important for political parties and politicians in the pre-modern era of political campaigns. However, the modern era has reduced the loyalty and the televised "meeting" was the established habit of the political actors. Until the post-modern era is the period of the permanent campaigns, the grassroot movements become significant and due to new channels of communication voter-politician dialogue it becomes interactive.[5]

According to chronological approach of political communication we can say that today's political communication is nothing more than the age of digital politainment, when paid (professional) advisers assists to political system (especially to political parties and politicians) to locate and to understand the voters' needs and manage the bottom-up movements. This set of approaches to political communication essentially mean diversity of dialogues, values, communicative decisions and issues. Fundamental goal is persuasion, which is often achieved through manipulation, where the political system and the advisers are using the dominant medium for the manipulation.[6]

The manipulation becomes conspicuous when on the top of political parties appear persons, the leaders who represent the parties, but they become more vulnerable for the electorate. The voters are starting to be familiar with their political representatives after few unveiled manipulation techniques. The politicians' traditional social embeddedness is changing. They have to fight harder for their electorate. The consultants help therein who are inventing new techniques to influence the electorate to change the direction of their attention. Voters should not focus only on politicians' decisions but the personal qualities of leaders, too. This is used to keep the leaders' political agendas prevail and it is effective action tool against opponents inside and outside the party, as well as creating a decisive force for future governance.[7]

2. Society-based interpretations

Fundamentally different lines of political communication research are represented by those researchers who have collected the characteristics of social and political changes. These works often draw attention to the social processes of political life, which does not necessarily apply equally to all democracies, but everywhere asserted their strong or weak effects. One part of these researches describes the political transition from post-industrial society to information society, while another part focuses on the perceived change of political communication in the information society.

The first portrayist of the transition from post-industrial society was *Zbigniew Brzezinski*.[8] He had summarized the main changes in ten points. He mapped the expected

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[5] Cf. NORRIS, PIPPA: *Revolution, What Revolution? The Internet and U.S. Elections, 1992–2000.* In: KAMARCK, ELAINE C. – NYE, JOSEPH S. (eds.): Governance.com? Democracy in the Information Age. Brookings Institution, Washington, 2002. pp. 59–80.; NORRIS, PIPPA: *A Virtuous Circle: Reinventing Political Activism.* Cambridge University Press, New York, 2003. pp. 16–21.

[6] SZÉCSI GÁBOR: *Etika és politikai kommunikáció.* Iskolakultúra 2007/3. pp. 142–148.

[7] POGUNTKE, THOMAS – WEBB, PAUL D.: *The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societes: A Framework for Analysis.* In: POGUNTKE THOMAS – WEBB PAUL D. (eds.): The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007. pp. 1–25.

[8] BRZEZINSKI, ZBIGNIEW: *Between Two Ages: America's Role in the Technetronic Era.* The Viking Press, New York, 1970.

social mechanisms of the so called technetronic era, such as lifelong learning, the fusion of the economic forces with political forces, the automated workflows, etc. Basically, *Brzezinski* writes about the challenges faced by the political system that can be indirectly used for political communication. *Daniel Bell* writes about similar changes, except that he analyzes the shifts of periods in chronological and social dimensions, while he gives little response to changes in political system.[9]

In addition to the chronological interpretations *Jay Blumler* and *Dennis Kavanagh* were collected the social and political processes, too, that take place in political communication.[10] According to them the modernization, increased individualization, secularization, economization, aestheticization, rationalization and mediatization are the most important changes in the twentieth century's political communication. However, the authors ignored the growing significance of the information age.

Andrew Chadwick writes about eight nowadays applicable social impacts on political communication.[11] He builds his conclusions on *Philip Agre*'s 2002 study, but he improves those statements.[12] The first is decentralization, which operates within the realm of the economy and the media and it means the changing role of the gatekeepers. Before the world of the internet they had a monopoly, but they found new challenger with the advent of e-commerce and blogs.

The second is the participation, because it is obvious even to those who rarely use the internet, that conversation (or chat) about political topics is everyday activity in the online space. People can argue, compete, collaborate, or simply share their thoughts with the public on various forums. This is nothing more than the advent of deliberative democracy.

The third impact is the community. The real curses of our societies are social fragmentations, the spirit of competition, the erosion of local identities and the general political apathy. These problems dissolve within the realm of the community in digital world. The discussion about the politics in online communities brings us to a new meaning of political communication.

Fourth is the globalization. Studies about the complexity of this concept are published for decades. We have to think on organizations working on global level that also exert some kind of political communication. Traditionally, these organizations are for instance the United Nations, but so are the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN).

The fifth conclusion is the post-industrialism. Chadwick sees the slow adaption of the traditional political organizations to the information society in the political dimension of post-industrialism. The politics can provide a good career for those who want to succeed in traditional, "offline" world. This kind of political communication is well suited for traditional political mobilization.

The rationalization is the sixth, during which new demands appears on the side of electorate. People are expecting cheaper, more reasonable bureaucracy and state from

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[9]   BELL, DANIEL: *The Social Framework of the Information Society.* In: DERTOUZOS, MICHAEL – MOSES JOEL (eds): The Computer Age: A Twenty-year View. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1979. pp. 163–211.

[10] BLUMLER – KAVANAGH 1999, pp. 210–211.

[11] CHADWICK, ANDREW: *Internet Politics: States, Citizens, and New Communication Technologies.* Oxford University Press, New York, 2006. 22–33. pp.

[12] AGRE, PHILIP E.: *Real Time Politics: The Internet and the Political Process.* Information Society 2002/5. pp. 311–331.

the use of information technologies in politics, and not least, they are requiring to have full information about the parties and the candidates before the elections.

These desires lead us to the seventh impact, to the governance, from which the society hope to use the digital networks and communities by the governance. Chadwick's final conclusion is the libertarianism, which pervades the internet, including the politics on the internet from the beginning. The libertarianism explains the nature, the meaning and earlier mistakes of the internet politics.

James Druckman, Martin Kifer and *Michael Parkin* think that during the election campaigns the internet is in the focus of modern political communication research.[13] They are approaching this question from the politicians' side, how and why the candidates use the novelty of the web? The self-representation and the interactivity are the two motives, which makes the candidate to use the digital space. The politicians are able – with the help of multimedia tools – to grab citizen's attention and be able to make sympathetic his person and policy by the representation.[14] Thus the candidates' websites are similar to an electronic brochure, on which important aspect will be that how frequently are updated the information, and how relevant they are. Interactivity provides bi-directional communication. The site visitors' attention can be influenced by the interactivity may be achieved that the voters learn new things about the candidate. The risk is that the voters could inquire for issues which are irrelevant for the politician. Interactivity includes personalization, because the candidate himself appears during the communication process, as well.

This selection of works here points out that political communication of the information society is not merely a continuation of post-industrial methods, but by integrated use of old techniques it also means development of new methods. The new ways of political communication are also implying traditional door-to-door campaigns, as well as mobilization on web-based digital networks. It is important to note that these are functional networks, which links to various processes and work. The networks could recreate themselves if they have faded for some reason, thus their structure is changing continuously.[15] The researcher can only track political trends on digital networks, it is impossible to follow the movement of networks as an outsider on a daily basis. Therefore the scholars can only state the new methods of political communication as a current direction of a tendency.

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[13] DRUCKMAN, JAMES N. – KIFER, MARTIN J. – PARKIN, MICHAEL: *The Technological Development of Congressional Candidate Web Sites: How and Why Candidates Use Web Innovations.* Social Science Computer Review 2007/4. pp. 425–442.

[14] Cf. BAUMGARTNER, JODY – MORRIS, JONATHAN S.: *MyFaceTube Politics. Social Networking Web Sites and Political Engagement of Young Adults.* Social Science Computer Review 2010/1. pp. 24–44.

[15] CAPRA, FRITJOF: *Living Networks.* In: MCCARTHY, HELEN – MILLER PAUL – SKIDMORE, PAUL (eds.): Network Logic: Who Governs in an Interconnected World? Demos, London, 2004. pp. 30–33.

III. The expected challenges of political communication

When we explore the new possibilities of political communication, it is important to note above all, that the "offline" methods of political communication are in the little finger of politicians, citizens and the media. Communication based clearly on the traditional media is political adventure. The voters expect that the politicians have at least one official website where they can be accessed online, and where the voters can obtain information about them.

The modern citizens' main arena for political activity is the "online world", which may have "offline" manifestations, too. For this reason is the citizens' political communication dual. The duality is manifested in either active way, whenever using only information networks for action (from e-administration to cyber attacks on government's servers), or inactive way, when using information networks to organize an event, but the implementation is an "offline" action (from visit to a Member of Parliament's online page, collection of information to online organized political rally which realizes in the real world). Both actions have harmless and dangerous forms. The active way of political action is more difficult to observe, because they are easily lost sight of from researchers or authorities.[16]

The boundaries of traditional media contents have become scarce, and therefore its political communication is redundant, it is limited to repetitions. The media becomes complete with the online content, but here we could find new challengers, not only the politicians but the citizens are competing with the media in the online space. The politicians and the citizens are able to take over certain tasks from the media and to create their own 'media networks' (e.g.: blogs, social networking sites, RSS readers, etc.).

These mean that if we talk about the new possibilities of political communication, then we should discuss about networks: the network of politics, the voters' (or citizens') network and the network of the media. Without the network effect we could still talk about local communities of national system, instead of much bigger communities created by the use of machines.[17] Bearing in mind the networking features of today's political communication, I think the following five phenomena could be observed in the near future: decentralization, openness, mobilization, strengthening of the pro-am class and the multi-point communications.

1. Decentralization

I already write about the process of decentralization in connection of *Andrew Chadwick* and *Philip Agre*. They fundamentally understand the concept in the change of intermediate players in the communication processes. At the end of the process of decentralization all political parties, representatives and other political actors may have a direct communication channel, they can connect with their voters via the network.[18]

From the perspective of the political network this means that they should not necessarily care about the phenomenon of mediatization to get the message through intermediaries like

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[16] MERKOVITY NORBERT: *Bevezetés a hagyományos és az új politikai kommunikáció elméletébe.* Pólay Elemér Alapítvány, Szeged, 2012. pp. 181–187.

[17] WEBB, JEN – SCHIRATO, TONY: *Communication Technology and Cultural Politics.* Convergence 2006/3. pp. 255–261.

[18] AGRE 2002, p. 312.

media to the citizens. "No political campaign without media campaign" thesis seems obsolete. Politicians can have their own channel on digital networks, with the criterion that the content must be attractive enough to raise citizens' awareness to the messages. In this will help the interaction. Continuous, bi-directional flow of information is taking place on the digital networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and YouTube social networking and video sharing sites. These new communication technologies lead to the democratization of the practice of political communication.[19]

Decentralization is not only presented in blogs, forums, chat rooms, community sites for the network of voters. All these channels are just the beginning, because now does not matter how close is someone to the gatekeepers in the communication process. The real question is how can they develop themselves? Or do they represent their real personality in the online world or not?[20] Experience has shown that the false personality quickly unfold and disappear in the world of communities. The networked individual is the essence of community where everyone can find their own agents and networks.[21]

It should be noted that citizens with false identity would rarely use political networks, because of increased risk of getting caught, but when they does, the most times lonely users are concerned. The solitary user can be for instance the "Nigerian prince", who left his money in different bank accounts, and who occurs for help at our e-mail address, or the case of the won lottery ticket, when from more than one million e-mail addresses ours is the winner. Of course, these networks do not provide the backbone of digital political communication.

The traditional media lose most of its weight with the decentralization in political communication. From the clear intermediary role it slowly transforms to follower. This process could be changed if it allows more citizens to hear their voice on its channels that means to wide open the media networks door, where next to the professionals amateur journalists could hear their voice, too. Many editorial boards of the traditional media are already trying with disclosure of amateurs' photos, blogs, videos, etc. The real change could come when the traditional and new media will fully intertwine. Because most people in information networks are consumers of information and news, as well, therefore very diverse writings could be born in opinion genres.[22] However, if the citizens would not write only opinion genres, but they move towards the Anglo-Saxon type of watchdog journalism and they could benefit from the help of professional journalists, today's political communication and democracy could easily show much different picture.[23]

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[19] HOWARD, PHILIP N. – PARKS, MALCOM R.: *Social Media and Political Change: Capacity, Constraint, and Consequence.* Journal of Communication 2012/2. pp. 359–362.; PAPACHARISSI, ZIZI: *On Networked Publics and Private Spheres in Social Media.* In: HUNSINGER, JEREMY – SENFT, THERESA M. (eds.): The Social Media Handbook, Routledge. New York, 2014. pp. 146–149.

[20] Cf. TURKLE, SHERRY: *Constructions and Reconstructions of Self in Virtual Reality: Playing in the MUDs.* In: KIESLER, SARA (ed.): Culture of the Internet. Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, 1997. 143–156. pp.

[21] WELLMAN, BARRY: *The Persistence and Transformation of Community: From Neighbourhood Groups to Social Networks. Report to the Law Commission of Canada.* Wellman Associates, Toronto, 2001. pp. 60–62.

[22] GILLMOR, DAN: *We the Media.* O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol, 2004. pp. 23–43.

[23] Example for this kind of collaborative work in Hungary is the Tékozló Homár [Prodigal Lobster] blog on protection of consumers' rights, which works with the help of the Index news portal. Availabile at http://homar.blog.hu/

2. Openness

The core issue in the near future will be how successful would narrow the digital divide by the governments, because this is the way to gain more ground for online administration, which could basically reform the other aspects of digital administration (either formal or civil), as well. Last but not least, this could also lead to further liberalization of information networks.

The impact of the openness will forge the political networks to rethink the strong marketing presence in political communication. The economic approach harms the image of politics and politicians. It also harms if the political discourse dissolves in the themes of entertainment's fashionable content. These characteristics of political marketing in the practice of political communication are strengthening the public apathy towards politics.[24] The task of contemporary political communication would be the opposite, through a policy of openness the politics could build a relationship of trust with the society, which could develop further in the information networks.

Naturally, political marketing could also take place here, but it may no longer resemble forced sale, more precisely, it may not bear clearly recognizable marketing signs, which are well known by the electorate. The political networks will need to adopt the ideas of online marketing to politics. These ideas can be found in the long tail theory,[25] in the idea of semantic web,[26] or – what is more visible in the politics – the use of social networking sites in purposes of political marketing, etc.[27] Probably, these examples could mean the next era of communication for political networks.

The openness gives the greatest potential to the network of citizens, since they can connect in large numbers. The lack of interpersonal communication is maintained like it was in the age of mass media, but the lack of reciprocity ceases between the transmitter and the receiver of messages. Similar activities could call into life from community to community that can become global through weak ties, leading to extension in interactivity.[28] These processes may promote the globalization of democracy. It is also likely that this process will lead to the weakening of national political communication, and more active resistance of citizens against traditional methods of political marketing.

Openness is expected to affect on the attitudes of media networks to political communication. The network of media is necessary to change the schema that the communication is created by the politics and the political parties, where the media

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[24] HABERMAS, JÜRGEN: *Political Communication in Media Society: Does Democracy Still Enjoy an Epistemic Dimension? The Impact of Normative Theory on Empirical Research*. Communication Theory 2006/4. pp. 420–423.

[25] Cf. ANDERSON, CHRIS: *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*. Hyperion, New York, 2006.

[26] LU, SHIYONG – DONG, MING – FOTOUHI, FARSHAD: *The Semantic Web: Opportunities and Challenges for Next-generation Web Applications*. Information Research 2002/4. Retrieved from http://www.informationr.net/ir/7-4/paper134.html; MARKOFF, JOHN: *Entrepreneurs See a Web Guided by Common Sense*. The New York Times 2006/November 12. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2006/11/12/business/12web.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

[27] Cf. DAVIES, PHILIP J. – NEWMAN, BRUCE I.: *Winning Elections with Political Marketing*. Haworth Press, New York, 2006.

[28] FENTON, NATALIE: *Mediating Hope: New Media, Politics and Resistance*. International Journal of Cultural Studies 2008/2. pp. 234–238.; SASSEN, SASKIA: *Electronic Markets and Activist Networks: The Weight of Social Logics in Digital Formations*. In: LATHAM, ROBERT – SASSEN, SASKIA (eds.): Digital Formations: New Architectures for Global Order. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005. pp. 54–56.

intermediate between political institutions, state institutions and the citizens.[29] Openness weakens the role of intermediaries like the media system, but there will be a huge gap between the formal and informal administration, deficit in navigating between legal possibilities or in the field of watchdog journalism. These features would be unfeasible without the traditional informative, analytical and evaluating role of media. However, the most likely is that the media will deliver these functions with the help of civilians – as indicated in the section on decentralization.

3. Mobilization

The mobilization is essentially inherent in the election and political campaigns in political communication. One measure of the cyclically repeated ritual drama is who can mobilize larger number of citizens to a meeting, who can mobilize more voters on election day.[30] The mobilization is an essential feature of the political system, less often used by the media system. However, the manipulative mobilization initiatives must be listed here, as well, which starting point is in the political system, but the media will be the executor – typically the mobilization activities of the media with extreme political views can be listed here.

The mobilization will go through a change in the future of political communication. The networks of the media must become more responsive on non-governmental initiatives, and it should neglect, if it is possible, the initiatives from political system which are using the traditional means of political communication. This shift has to be made, because the media would serve the "all figured out" political communication strengthening the citizens' political apathy by this in one hand. On the other hand, the media itself would represent itself as the advocate of the "old" system. Without the support of civil society's mobilization initiatives media would undermine the organization, which could exist between a functioning democracy and citizens.[31] The citizens of the digital networks may be able to bypass the media, and at the same time to make the media system look like as a spectacle from the past.

The political network cannot really add new to the phenomenon of mobilization. More precisely, it cannot expand the concept with new toolboxes. However, mobilized masses established apart from the political system can be the base of the new political communication. The fundamental approach on the mobilization of the political network that established from outside the political system has been that if it found to be acceptable it joined and took the lead. The American presidential elections from 2008 or the 2013 Italian elections and the Five Star Movement have shown what means mobilization for politics beyond the joining.

For instance, *Barack Obama*'s staff was able to deftly connect with (online or offline) civil initiatives in the beginning of the 2008 presidential campaign, which stood for changes in the U.S. policy (against the war in Iraq, the pro-abortion rights or pro-gun control, against president *George W. Bush*'s domestic and foreign policies etc.). Later used these organized

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[29] RÖMMELE, ANDREA: *Political Parties, Party Communication and New Information and Communication Technologies*. Party Politics 2003/1. pp. 12–15.

[30] GASTIL 2008, pp. 93–94.

[31] FENTON 2008, p. 239.

initiatives to mobilize other near satellite organizations for campaign purposes and after then the staff mobilized their near satellite organizations, and so on. Hundreds of thousands campaign activists stood next to presidential candidate in the mid-campaign, most of these organizations were not even close to the central *Obama* campaign. This kind of activist was the majority in the campaign who urge the voters for registration and voting.

The mobilization raise an important question to the network of citizen: whether the information network is a new way for people to carry out the old things, or an attitude shift will take place in the near future? I believe the answer is somewhere in between the two options. "The Internet provides people with a technology that allows them to engage in activities that they have already had ways to engage in but provides them with some added efficiencies and opportunities to tailor their interactions to better meet their needs. However, there is nothing fundamentally different about the Internet that transforms basic psychological or social life."[32] The opportunities on information networks equalize the possibilities for citizens with the probability what previously the media and political networks had. Today the citizens could also mobilize communities and networks.

4. Pro-am class

The pro-am class phenomenon is involved in political communication, which will be affected basically on the network of citizens. The professional-amateur (pro-am) class means users, who are familiar with digital networks, who can professionally handle the challenges of information era, but this is not what they do for living, thus they are amateurs. This phenomenon is relatively well known. The origins of the concept explain that some simple consumers easily can become producers.[33]

The same phenomenon is called prosumer, and it comes from the merging of words producers (manufacturers) and consumers in *Alvin Toffler*'s book The Third Wave. *Toffler* connects the term to the people who are self-supporting. According to him, these citizens change the production to such an extent that it questions the post-industrial economic theories.[34] In the millennium years, the word producer is replaced with professional in the concept of prosumers, which meant to highlight the technological labor skill of the users. The phenomenon was further thought by *Charles Leadbeater* and *Paul Miller*, who linked technological innovators and those who have made changes in the economy.[35]

The "professional-amateurs" or the pro-ams are forcing us to rethink the established social divides, their work cannot be characterized simply with the traditional "being employed" marker or with professional and amateur, producer and consumer labels. It is expected that the professional-amateurs will be strong not only in technology and manufacturing issues, but also in the field of social processes. The ideal pro-am better understands the media and political networks like some "native" journalist or politician.

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[32] TYLER, TOM R.: *Is the Internet Changing Social Life? It Seems the More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same.* Journal of Social Issues 2002/1. p. 204.

[33] Cf. MCLUHAN, MARSHALL – NEVITT, BARRINGTON: *Take Today: The Executive as Dropout.* Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich Inc., New York, 1972.

[34] TOFFLER, ALVIN: *The Third Wave.* Bantam Books, New York, 1980. pp. 265–288.

[35] LEADBEATER, CHARLES – MILLER, PAUL: *The Pro–Am Revolution.* Demos, London, 2004. p. 20.

The pro-am citizens can confidently engage in social interactions taking place around him or her, capable to help, and if necessary, to improve the interactions, as well. Pro-ams are the road signs in the interactive part of the new political communication. They may perform the third phase of political socialization (after the family and the school). They may be able to make successful the citizens started mobilization.

The media network is responsible for ensuring that not to flee from the pro-ams into the poor version of info- and politainment. In recent years widespread 'celebrity-type' of media will tie-up on the pro-ams' filter. When the media want to aim to inform entertainingly it need to increasingly take care that the entertainment should not grow at the expense of information, otherwise it may become weightless actor in the new political communication.

The political system has to conduct professional work on the area of policies and to overshadow the communicative elements, because the pro-ams can easily find the gap in the communication and to make the entire work vulnerable. The first transnational signs can be explored during the demonstrations on international economic meetings. One of the first such was the famous anti-globalist movement, the "Seattle Battle" from 1999, when the representatives of consumers, various grassroot movements and the anti-capitalists were protesting against the World Trade Organization's (WTO) meeting in Seattle, while 87 countries, 1,200 non-governmental organization (NGO) warned the WTO to change its policy. Indeed, it was an anti-globalist movement, while it was the first spectacular manifestation of the pro-ams, which indicated that beyond the political communication, someone also deals with policy issues, too.

5. Multipoint communication

The multipoint-to-point network means in practice that the processes of social and political events mainly take place in the mass media. People, in fact, are excluded from the active processes of social communication in mass media. Today, with the convergence of traditional media and digitalisation multipoint-to-multipoint networks are established. This brings us to the world of interactions, where the concept of interaction is rather a confusing term in the environment the new ICTs, because it may also refer to more than one phenomenon. It can represent the interaction between humans and computers, but it can also mean cooperation of computers with each other through software, hardware and networks, as well.[36]

This phenomenon refers on the process of change in communication. The rituals of conflict and consensus that are the basic institutions of political communication are switching from the current point-to-point or multipoint-to-point communication to multipoint-to-multipoint communication. It is a process in which besides the earlier communicators and endpoints several alternative communicators and endpoints are created.

Previously – mainly because of the mass media – the social communication and thus the political communication worked in multipoint-to-point network. This meant in practice that the processes of social and political events mainly took place on mass media. People were excluded from the processes of social communication in fact, so they were

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[36] STROMER-GALLEY, JENNIFER: *Interactivity-as-product and interactivity-as-process*. The Information Society 2004/5. p. 391.

excluded from the wider political communication and political decisions, as well.[37] Today, with the convergence of traditional media and digitalization multipoint-to-multipoint networks are established, where practically anyone can transmit the message and anyone can be able to convey descriptions about anyone to anyone.

Andrew Shapiro has a different approach to the issue of social communication: he is starting with the first telecommunication devices. According to him, the telegraph and the telephone are the representatives of one-to-one communication. The mass media is functioning as one-to-many communication, and the digital networks such as the internet are putting in the forefront the many-to-many communication, while it also merge the earlier communication forms.[38] For these reasons the multipoint communication has no winners or losers in political communication. Everyone can win if the users like political and media network and the network of citizens understand the social mechanism of communication.

The multipoint-to-multipoint connections are making much more decentralized political communication in information networks, while its diversity, impact and extent increase. The authority status of organizational actors will weaken whether it is the state, the government or the mainstream media.[39] However, a small group of citizens and voters may refer their will to the general public, as well. It could easily happen that the opinion of a group of people would have a good chance to compete with state's opinion in a multipoint communication. Everything will depend on how can they communicate their views? At the moment, the louder, funnier, more popular, etc. will catch sight of the citizens' multipoint communication, which is attributable to the impact of the mass media. The question is how would this change? What kind of shifts in emphasis could we discover in the near future when the next generation grows up, which is now sitting more in front of the computer than in front of the TV? I am afraid that the answers are about four to eight years away.

The weakening of media and political networks seems a minor problem beside the great possibility that these networks can find help in citizens' networks, even through manipulation. They can constantly test new ideas, plans, what they are doing now with public opinion research firms, but the media and the politics could analyze public with direct and continuous interaction (fine-tuning) in multipoint communication along the scope of omitting the polls. The political network could achieve better results and regain citizens' confidence, while the media system could focus the attention on its own content. Multipoint communication could be an important phenomenon in the recovery of civic trust for the political and the media networks.

IV. Conclusion

Klaus Lenk raised the question in his study on information technology and social relations in the eighties that could all social power use successfully the information technology to

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[37] BLUMLER, JAY G.: *Elections, the Media and the Modern Publicity Process.* In: FERGUSON, MARJORIE (ed.): Public Communication: The New Imperatives. SAGE, London, 1990. p. 103.; BRANTS, KEES: *Who's Afraid of Infotainment?* European Journal of Communication 1998/3. p. 319.

[38] SHAPIRO, ANDREW L.: *The Control Revolution: How the Internet is Putting Individuals in Charge and Changing the World We Know.* Public Affairs, New York, 1999. p. 15.

[39] CHADWICK 2006, p. 227.

achieve their goals, or certain groups of interests are more, others are less served by this technology?[40] Seeing this dilemma, we could get to the conclusion that the challenges in the information society raise the same question to the political communication. There is no question that political communication is changing, it is enough if we think back to the above mentioned US presidential election from 2008 or to the Italian Five Star Movement, where already tried campaign methods were coordinated and used in the concept of new political communication.

It is not a question that mobilization and openness to new solutions is in the nature of political communication and it is unparalleled with the practice from the eighties and the nineties, or more accurately with the form of political communication from the last century. These two phenomena are the core for the new political communication. It is also not a question that the professional-amateur class is growing up who are socializing in multipoint-to-multipoint communications. Finally, all of these combined effects decentralize the triangle of politics, media and citizens in political communication, and therefore the decentralization may be the most important process in the new history of political communication.

However, one important question remains: does the politics want to be in control of their own communication networks, such as was previously – mainly in Asia, Europe and Latin America – with the radio and the television? Is this question still relevant in the era of globalized societies? Hopefully not, because the information networks are so decentralized today, that in a communist country such as China the process of decentralization is unstoppable. The situation in Myanmar and North Korea are different, where the spread of digital networks are prevented, therefore their social impact is insignificant, and it could not initiate the political communication.

The media is the most controversial actor in the new political communication. Previously, when the media acted as the gatekeeper, the fourth branch of power and as a watchdog or represented the advocacy journalism its role was clear. However, the media has faced serious challenges with the emergence of information networks. The fact that anyone can communicate anything at any time on digital networks, the media lost the role of gatekeeper. The blogs of professional journalists' and pro-am class' are the pathways to the fifth branch of power.[41] Maybe this statement is too early to confirm, but we could state that the civil journalism is definitely expanding the role of watchdog and advocacy journalism.

A part of media network is slowly dissolving in the citizens' network, because the professional journalists are becoming more 'civilian' and the amateur 'journalists' are becoming more sophisticated. The other part of the media network, which is controlled by the politics, is dissolving in the political network. If the media does not respond to the challenges of the new political communication as I wrote above, it is quite possible that the future political communication would have only two relevant actors, the networks of politics and citizens.

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[40] LENK, KLAUS: *Információs technológia és a társadalom.* In: FRIEDRICHS, GÜNTER – SCHAFF, ADAM (eds.): Mikroelektronika és társadalom: Áldás vagy átok. Jelentés a Római Klub számára. Statisztikai Kiadó Vállalat, Budapest, 1984. 269. p.

[41] Cf. GILLMOR 2004.; HIMMELSBACH, SABINE: *Blog. The New Public Forum: Private Matters, Political Issues, Corporate Interests.* In: LATOUR, BRUNO – WEIBEL, PETER (eds.): Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy. MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005. pp. 916–921.

The citizens would be the clear winners of the process, because they could have the access to the central role in the new political communication which was presumed lost from ancient time, from the direct democracy of ancient Greeks. Citizens will have a chance – if they want – to take part in communication and in interaction processes. The citizens' duty is to know and to use the information networks. If these two conditions are met, then the challenges of the new political communication on the citizens' network would generally resolve themselves. The possibility is low for the network of citizens to accept their responsibility, since this network is more heterogeneous than the political network, but the potential and the technology for this role is in the hands of the citizens.

MERKOVITY NORBERT

A POLITIKAI KOMMUNIKÁCIÓ NYILVÁNOSSÁG-DIALÓGUS MODELLJE AZ INFORMÁCIÓS KORBAN

(Összefoglalás)

Steven Chaffee definíciója alapján a politikai kommunikáció nem más, mint „a kommunikáció szerepe a politikai folyamatokban".[42] Központi rendező elvnek tekinthető ez az értelmezés, amikor a politikatudomány e részterületéről értekezünk. Az újmédia megjelenése semmit sem változtatott Chaffee megállapításán. Ugyanakkor a kommunikációs környezet és a politikai folyamatok természete sokat fejlődtek az utóbbi évtizedekben, az így végbemenő változások hatással lesznek a politikai kommunikációra is. Csak az elmúlt pár évben szemtanúi lehettünk az Arab tavasznak, az Occupy mozgalomnak, egy sor Facebook/Twitter kampánynak, új politikai pártok felemelkedésének és régiek bukásának. A tanulmány áttekinti a fellelhető társadalmi és fejlődési változások variációit és elemzi a várható kihívásokat, amelyek a politikai kommunikációban is megjelennek. Ezek a kihívások a következők: decentralizáció, nyitottság, mobilizáció, Pro-Am osztály és multipont kommunikáció. A decentralizáció a kommunikációs csatornák fragmentációját írja le. A nyitottság azt, hogy a politikai marketing hogyan formálja át a politikai kommunikációt. A mobilizáció, mint eszköz tág lehetőséget ad a választóknak és a politikai szereplőknek. A Pro-Am osztály képes arra, hogy a perszonalizáció új módozatait fedezze fel. Végezetül, a multipont kommunikáció azokat a változásokat írja le, amelyek a közösségi média következtében történtek a választókkal, a politikai szereplőkkel és különösen a médiarendszerrel. A tanulmányban Gianpietro Mazzoleni nyilvánosság-dialógus modellje alapján kerül vizsgálat alá a politikai kommunikáció három fontos szereplője, a politikai rendszer, a médiarendszer és az állampolgárok.[43]

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[42] CHAFFEE, STEVEN H.: *Foreword: Asking New Questions About Communication and Politics*. In: CHAFFEE, STEVEN H. (szerk.): Political communication: Issues and Strategies for Research.. Sabe, Beverly Hills, 1975. p. 15.
[43] MAZZOLENI, GIANPIETRO: *La comunicazione politica*. Il Mulino, Bologna, 2004. pp. 20–21.