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Using Facebook in Political Communication of Cities of the Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia and their Mayors

KEY WORDS

ABSTRACT

The total number of Facebook users worldwide is now estimated at more than 600 million people. It is the most popular social network service in the world and its users are called the Facebook society. This is a platform, where political communication occurs more and more frequently, as a process in which politicians have the possibility to directly access voters, create public debate and strive for support of their political projects. Such communication processes are particularly important in local communities, where the role of debate has significant meaning. This local perspective of using Facebook in processes of political communication is discussed in the article herein presented.

The Metropolitan Association of Upper Silesia (Górnośląski Związek Metropolitalny – GZM) or the "Silesia" Metropolis (both names are correct and later in the article they will be used interchangeably) has been functioning for a few years now. It unites fourteen cities of Silesia and the Dąbrowa Basin cities, directly bordering each other and thus creating a natural metropolis structure. Debates on the legal, financial and organizational shape of the Metropolis, as a common, urban organism, have been taking place for many years, both on the national and local level. This aspect however will not be the issue of debate nor research. This study, conducted in May and June 2011, concerned the communication processes of Metropolis cities and their mayors[1], conducted with the use of social media. The question of analysis was their communication on the most popular, also in Poland, social network site

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[1] Mayors of the GZM cities are referred to in the text as local leaders.

Facebook[2]. It was restricted to their political communication during the election period, although on examination, their communication processes, apart from the campaign period, enabled formulating additional conclusions in the comparative aspect. Such a definition of the research field served several purposes: defining in what way Facebook is used in election processes, comparing how cities and their mayors communicate in the communities they govern, and if they use communication via this social medium as a possibility of creating a network unifying the communication of the Metropolis as a common organism. Such research is all the more justified as internet access in all the cities of the metropolis is similar, and according to research, is between 50–70 pct., and in some areas even between 70–100 pct[3]. This allows formulating the conclusion that using internet communication, among it social network sites, is not a problem for the inhabitants of GZM, but rather a question of choice.

The purpose of the research was to indicate, if the cities and its leaders, who should strive for tightening relations and building one social form, which is the Metropolis, use the same or similar rules of communicating with inhabitants, by means of the same technology and media (social network site Facebook), or not. Literature and research in other countries indicating relations between political attitudes, level of political commitment and supporting civic consciousness confirm the growing importance of so-called new media, including social network sites, thus also Facebook, in strengthening participatory democracy. In the context of these ideas, it seems arguable to analyze, how Facebook is used in political communication of cities and their leaders, as a tool for communicating, image building, engaging local communities in public debate, and also accumulating local social capital in the process of public debates. Additionally, the subject of research was to show if Facebook communication was regular while in office, or rather served pre-election purposes and was active only during campaigns. The choice of Facebook as a social network site seems justified for two reasons. This site is at current the most popular, and according to data, its significance will grow, suggesting even that in the near future that Facebook will consume Internet pages, which will be substituted with *fan pages* of companies, institutions or public figures. Especially in the context of communication and image building, Facebook creates global communication ground, which means easier promotion and getting the information out to diverse users almost

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[2] Facebook is described as a social network site or service. Both terms are treated as synonymous and used interchangably. The current number of Facebook users in the world is estimated at over 600 mln, in Poland it is over 5 mln (data from May 2011).
[3] *Nasycenie usługami dostępu do Internetu w poszczególnych gminach*, www.mapa.uke.gov.pl/mapa1/ [accessed: 8.01.2012].

free-of-charge. The "Silesia" Metropolis, as a union of fourteen cities has their own fan page (under the name "Silesia" Metropolis (Metropolia Silesia), not Górnośląski Związek Metropolitalny), which will be presented in the conclusion.

Research methodology

The research was conducted between May 17th–18th and on June 2nd 2011 using the quantitative method of surveying the number of friends and information published on walls and posts (comments) to that information. Also measured was the number of posts added to the information by local leaders (city mayors), thus their participation in discussions around information published by the leaders. The research was also partly done by using the qualitative method, through content analysis of the published information. The object of research in the quantitative method were: having profiles or fan pages[4] by local leaders (city mayors) or cities of the "Silesia" Metropolis, activity of local leaders in communicating with inhabitants while in office (from May 9th to 13th 2011) and during the election campaign (from November 15th to 19th 2011), measuring the participation of mayors in the discussion (the number of posts added by leaders). Research done in the qualitative method attempted to describe the type of information published on profiles and fan pages of mayors, and if during the last election campaign, the city fan page was used for promotional purposes of the mayor running for re-election. The research had the following hypotheses made:

- communication of local leaders using the social network site Facebook has the nature of political communication, above all, with the purpose of image building for the local politician;
- communication of local leaders on Facebook does not have the nature of a public debate, in which the leader would participate and gives information, encouraging a social debate;
- local leaders intensify their communication using Facebook during the election period, treating this form of communication as a tool for reaching voters with their information;
- using profiles or fan pages by local leaders is not aimed at creating new forms of virtual local communities.

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[4] Fan page – a public profile, which is started by companies, organisations, institutions and public figures. Entries on fan pages do not have a private nature, but a public one and serve institutional communication.

The list of cites from the "Silesia" Metropolis and local leaders (city mayors) active on Facebook included in the research is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Cities of the "Silesia" Metropolis and their mayors included in research

City	Mayor	In office since the year	Political affiliation
Bytom	Piotr Koj	2006	Civic Platform (PO)
Chorzów	Andrzej Kotala	2010	Civic Platform (PO)
Dąbrowa Górnicza	Zbigniew Podraza	2006	Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)
Gliwice	Zygmunt Frankiewicz	1993	independent
Jaworzno	Paweł Silbert	2002	independent
Katowice	Piotr Uszok	1998	independent
Mysłowice	Edward Lasok	2010	independent
Piekary Śląskie	Stanisław Korfanty	2002	independent
Ruda Śląska	Grażyna Dziedzic	2010	independent
Siemianowice Śląskie	Jacek Guzy	2006	independent
Sosnowiec	Kazimierz Górski	2002	Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)
Świętochłowice	Dawid Kostempski	2010	Civic Platform (PO)
Tychy	Andrzej Dziuba	2000	independent
Zabrze	Małgorzata Mańka-Szulik	2006	independent

Research results

Research data is presented in tables 2–5.

Table 2. Activity of GZM mayors on the social network site Facebook –
data from May 17th 2011.

City/mayor	Fan page number of friends/content	Own profile number of friends/content
Bytom / Piotr Koj	79 / official information	1886 / content of the wall is copied to the fan page
Chorzów / Andrzej Kotala	none	84 (shares wall with other users) / election information)
Dąbrowa Górnicza / Zbigniew Podraza	351 (active in the period between 14.10. to 5.12.2010) / election information	none
Gliwice / Zygmunt Frankiewicz	807 / official information	none
Jaworzno / Paweł Silbert	3 / invitation to website	none
Katowice / Piotr Uszok	59 (no content)	813 (shares wall with other users) / official information
Mysłowice / Edward Lasok	none	668 (shares wall with other users) / official information)
Piekary Śląskie / Stanisław Korfanty	none	none
Ruda Śląska / Grażyna Dziedzic	132 (last post 6.12.2010) / official information	112 (no content)
Siemianowice Śląskie / Jacek Guzy	none	none
Sosnowiec / Kazimierz Górski	none	none
Świętochłowice / Dawid Kostempski	none	612 (shares wall with other users)/ official information
Tychy / Andrzej Dziuba	739 / official information	none
Zabrze / Małgorzata Mańka-Szulik	none	662 / official information

Table 2 shows the activities of city mayors from the "Silesia" Metropolis on Facebook. Data shows that some of the mayors communicate directly through fan pages (as public figures), some have their own profiles as private citizens, some however do not use this form of communication at all. The mayor of Bytom is the only one who has both a fan page and a private account. However, the content analysis of both shows that the posts are copied and the same content is added both to his fan page as to the private profile. It reveal the lack of understanding Facebook communication rules, either by the mayor or the person

responsible for administering these accounts. Personal profiles are created by physical people, who want to participate in global communication, creating their own group of friends and a profile in such a way, so as to receive information on subjects of their interest. Fan pages are dedicated to companies, institutions and public figures, who unite a group of people creating the subjects environment and are interested in receiving messages on the activity of this subject. The purpose of both tools is different and serves other means. Public figures, such as city mayors, should have a fan page for their official communication, while their profile should be reserved for discussions of a private nature. Among mayors, who use either option, other regularities were observed, such as using profiles or fan pages for political communication, and at the same time, making their profiles or fan pages accessible to other people for publishing content, even of a private nature. Another observed tendency was starting a profile of fan page only for the purpose of running an election campaign. This type of activity was seen with the mayors of: Chorzów, Ruda Śląska, Dąbrowa Górnicza and Jaworzno. It shows that political communication on Facebook is used rather instrumentally, as an activation process for election purposes during the pre-election campaign.

Table 3. Activity of GZM cities on Facebook – data collected on May 18th 2011.

City	Official city profile on Facebook – number of fans	Linking the account with city hall (UM) official homepage
Bytom	none	–
Chorzów	none	–
Dąbrowa Górnicza	none	–
Gliwice	none	–
Jaworzno	none	–
Katowice	5036	no link from profile to UM website, but account marked as official city site
Mysłowice	none (group under the name Mysłowice, but is not marked as an official city account and in no other official way linked to UM)	–
Piekary Śląskie	none	–
Ruda Śląska	exists, but entering the profile redirects straight to UM website	–
Siemianowice Śląskie	none	–
Sosnowiec	578	account linked with UM website
Świętochłowice	none (there are a few pages with the name, but none is marked as an official UM site,	–

	nor linked with the UM website)	
Tychy	405	account linked with UM website
Zabrze	none	–

Research proved that among fourteen cities of the "Silesia" Metropolis only three cities communicated through Facebook (Ruda Śląska was not counted as a city with a Facebook account because accessing the fan page redirects to the city office website). This is less than the number of local leaders, who use this form of communication or used it during the election campaign. Only Tychy are consistent with their communication policy, having both a fan page for their mayor and city hall. Katowice has a city fan page (not connected with their internet site, but marked as an official profile) and a profile for the mayor (it should be a fan page). Sosnowiec has a fan page for the city, although the mayor does not communicate with the city's inhabitants through Facebook. Connecting fan pages with the internet sites of city offices, or just marking them as official city accounts, is essential in order to have identifiable communication. In the case of Mysłowice, there are several profiles which seem to look like official city hall accounts, but at the same time none of them are ascribed to the city's communication. Their content analysis also doesn't show that they concern official communication. Establishing if cities officially communicate on Facebook was important for conducting the analysis of the potential use of their fan pages during election campaigns. In three cases of cities with fan pages on Facebook, their mayors were running for re-election at the same time, therefore, there was a temptation to use communication possibilities of local leaders through official city hall channels. Content analysis of posts on city fan pages provided the conclusion that during the last week of the election campaign and during the last week before the second round (periods: November 15th to 19th and November 28th to December 2nd 2010) city accounts of Katowice and Sosnowiec were not used for promoting the candidate (the sitting mayor), his involvement in city issues was not presented, nor issues that would be considered abusive. In the case of Tychy, the use of the fan page for promotion was difficult to establish because the page was deleted (it functioned as a profile) and in the beginning of December 10th 2010, in its place appeared a fan page containing information published after December 8th 2010. It is therefore difficult to define, if the profile was used for promoting the mayor or if the reason for its deletion, and at the same time creating a new one, was abusive on the part of the city during the election campaign. Deleting the profile and

creating a fan page in its place "swept" the evidence of abuse during the campaign, if there was any.

Table 4. Activity of mayors on profiles/fan pages during fixed periods – holding office (9–13.05.2011) and during election campaigns (15–19.11.2010)*

City mayor	Activity – number of information published in the week (9–13.05.2011)/average number of posts to information/mayor participation	Content of information published in the analyzed period – about the city and private person	Activity – number of information entries published in the last week of the election campaign (15–19.11.2010)	Do the information posted in the pre-election period cause discussion and does the mayor/candidate participate in it***
Bytom / Piotr Koj	fan page and profile – publishing the same information **fan page** – 8 info. / 7 posts **profile** – 8 info / 37 posts / 1 mayor participation in discussion	official information, but also personal, e.g. literary interests the same information as on the fan page	6 information entries 6 information entries	no comments 72 posts / 3 posts by mayor
Chorzów / Andrzej Kotala	last information published 2.05.2011	no information	no activity between 29.10 and 25.11.2010	–
Dąbrowa Górnicza / Zbigniew Podraza	last post on 7.12.2010	no information	1 information entries	0 posts
Gliwice / Zygmunt Frankiewicz	last information published 1.05.2011	no information	5 information entry	59 posts / 2 posts added by the mayor
Jaworzno / Paweł Silbert	fan page was active only 1 day – 24.10.2010 r. – contains invitation to website	no information	no information	none
Katowice / Piotr Uszok	in the researched period information is published by other users	no information	1 information entry	0 posts / 2 posts added by the mayor to information posted on the wall

				by others
Mysłowice / Edward Lasok	no information in the researched period	no information	3 information entries	3 posts / no candidate posts
Ruda Śląska / Grażyna Dziedzic	**fan page** – last activity on 6.12.2010 **profile** – no information	no information	5 information entries	1 post / no candidate posts
Świętochłowice / Dawid Kostempski	2 published info / 3 posts / no discussion from the side of the mayor	information about the city	9 information entries	2 posts / no candidate posts
Tychy / Andrzej Dziuba	2 published info	information about the city and activity of mayor	14 information entries	41 posts / 2 posts from mayor
Zabrze / Małgorzata Mańka-Szulik	1 published info	information about the city	no activity during the period from 19.07.2010 to 9.02.2011	–

* The table includes only those mayors, who have a profile or fan page on Facebook.
**In the last column of the table I use the phrase mayor (when the person campaigning also held office) and candidate (a person, who ran for office, not re-election).

Table 4 shows a comparison of the number of different pieces of information published during two periods – to compare the activity of mayors when they held their office and during the election campaign. It allows making conclusions later on about the approach of local leaders to political communication processes, in the context of intensifying it during the election campaign or when in office. The above table lists only those mayors, who had a profile or a fan page during the time of research. An analysis of the results can allow some conclusions. First of all, some mayors treat communicating through Facebook as a tool during the election campaign. After it is over, so is their communication through this medium. This is visible with the mayors of: Dąbrowa Górnicza, Jaworzno, Mysłowice and Ruda Śląska. mayors of Zabrze and Chorzów did not communicate with their voters via internet – the mayor of Zabrze did not have a campaign on Facebook at all, while the mayor of Chorzów had it during a different period than that analyzed in research. Finally, the group of mayors, who intensified their communication during the election campaign; these were mayors from: Gliwice, Świętochłowice and Tychy. In this group, two mayors ran for reelection (Gliwice, Tychy), one was running for the first time (Świętochłowice).

Table 5. Results in local government elections in 2010

Mayor	Election / round	Support received in the winning round in pct.	Election turnout in the round the mayor was elected in pct.
Bytom / Piotr Koj	II round	52.93	26.39
Chorzów / Andrzej Kotala	II round	50.59	27.30
Dąbrowa Górnicza / Zbigniew Podraza	II round	63.60	29.75
Gliwice / Zygmunt Frankiewicz	II round	67.44	24.80
Jaworzno / Paweł Silbert	I round	64.46	41.24
Katowice / Piotr Uszok	I round	51.71	39.43
Mysłowice / Edward Lasok	II round	82.45	39.87
Piekary Śląskie / Stanisław Korfanty	I round	54.19	43.31
Ruda Śląska / Grażyna Dziedzic	II round	50.45	29.39
Siemianowice Śląskie / Jacek Guzy	I round	52.12	38.60
Sosnowiec / Kazimierz Górski	II round	53.31	21.42
Świętochłowice / Dawid Kostempski	II round	54.89	27.57
Tychy / Andrzej Dziuba	I round	55.94	42.92
Zabrze / Małgorzata Mańka-Szulik	I round	75.68	32.59

Table 5 shows the mayor's election results during the November 2010 elections and the turnout in the candidate's winning election round. The results show a few tendencies. First of all, the turnout in the first round of elections was on average higher and at around 39.68%, while in the second it reached – 28.31%. The second observation concerns support in the elections. Two mayors – of Zabrze and Jaworzno – received significant support (one of the highest in Poland) already in their first round. Both ran for re-election and neither had a campaign on Facebook. Additionally, Jaworzno had higher turnout than other cities of the Metropolis. Mayors who campaigned through Facebook, such as e.g. Ruda Śląska, Świętochłowice czy Mysłowice, are people who in the 2010 elections won for the first time, while the mayor of Tychy ran for another re-election and, for the first time won in the first round. In all these cases – communication through Facebook – was very intensive during the

election campaign. It is difficult to draw clear-cut conclusions, especially since support in the second round for the new mayors varied from a minimal lead against the opponent – Ruda Śląska or Chorzów – to a decisive win, like in Mysłowice. In-depth research would allow for a distinction, whether communication through Facebook could have had an influence on the choice of leader.

The last group of candidates were those who won elections in the first round without using Facebook, understood here as lacking a profile or fan page. In this group were the mayors of Siemianowice Śląskie and Piekary Śląskie – both running for re-election.

Conclusion

The data presented above allow formulating conclusions referring also to the hypothesis made. First of all, the Facebook communication of local leaders and cities of the "Silesia" Metropolis, is diverse, moderately popular, often done in an unprofessional manner and taken advantage of in election processes, as a medium serving political propaganda, not building a platform for public debate. A debate that could have a permanent nature and show new possibilities of communicating resulting from technological development, to permanently and directly communicate with the local communities, and thus have a dialogue on a local level and gain legitimacy to hold office. Local leaders did not treat information published on their fan pages or profiles as an invitation to a local public discussion, and even if such a discussion was taking place – they did not engage in it. The outcome is minimal interest in this form of communicating among local communities – this is visible in the analysis of the number of friends or people, who liked a fan page of local leaders. However, it is this aspect of virtual communication that is all the more often indicated as a possibility of creating alternative virtual societies and in certain situations, is capable of transferring activity onto reality. There are examples of such influential groups or groups supporting certain idea on Facebook, even in Poland. They have specific influence on non-virtual reality – they enable collecting social capital, free and non-anonymous discussion, and lastly, transferring activity to the real world.

Analyzing the research results of other countries in terms of political communication with the use of new media (among them social network sites), one can claim that their role is not yet as important as traditional media (press, radio, and especially television), but rapidly growing. Jan van Dijk underlines, that for the last twenty years, the democratic potential of new media has been praised – they strengthened the position of citizens, they were about the rebirth of direct democracy, allowing participation. Van Dijk writes: "Digital democracy

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allows: full and better information on political processes and the politics of the government, on-line public debates and greater, direct participation of citizens in decision-making"[5].

Castelles has a similar stand, placing attention on the use of email as a means of spreading political propaganda – a tool which en mass distributes a direct political message[6]. However, he also points to the use of other internet communication tools in election processes – starting websites, but not trying to activate, especially local communities, in an Internet debate around local issues, which apart from creating a platform for exchanging opinions, also serves self-organization of citizens and creating certain, although weak, communities, whose activity is a form of aggregating local social capital[7].

Another important element underlining the role of social media is their importance in increasing participation in political debate, a direct exchange of political views. Research, which as so far been conducted and which van Dijk quotes, did not confirm the thesis that social media and the Internet increase participation in debates or interactivity. Normally participation in debates on a certain subject aims at using the possibility to say something on a subject or referring to statements made by other participants of the discussion. It does not however influence an important element of traditional debates which are: striving towards a consensus, formulating conclusions, exchanging opinions and interacting in the same time and place. What is underlined by those researching this area of Internet activity, what should be pointed out is the very important role of Internet media discussion forums in activating people, the possibility to create political communities in the future, and what follows – an alternative to the current view of politics, communities and election processes. The same argument is underlined by Castelles, writing that the Internet is a tool for creating and maintaining social ties, in which communication serves free discussion, informing local public opinion or democratic control[8].

According to researchers quoted by Jan van Dijk[9], there is no connection showing that the creation and activity in social media influence political participation. Another issue is that social media have created an alternative and additional source of information. The Internet allows getting information directly from the source, and its quick transfer to others. The research confirmed furthermore, that just searching for information on political events, parties

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[5] J. van Dijk, *Społeczne aspekty nowych mediów. Analiza społeczeństwa sieci* [*Network society. Social aspects of new media*], Warszawa 2010, p. 138.
[6] M. Castells, *Społeczeństwo sieci* [*Rise of the network society*], Warszawa 2010, p. 391.
[7] Ibidem, pp. 389 and 391.
[8] Ibidem, pp. 388 and next.
[9] J. van Dijk, *Społeczne aspekty…*, p. 153.

or candidates is much more popular than participating in discussions or – in the case of candidates – running an election campaign on the web.

As van Dijk and his fellow scholars show: "In the United States and in many other countries, where the relative research was done, around 10–20% of Internet users engaged at the end of the 1990s in some form of political activity. More and more Internet users look into political information portals. In 2002 their number grew to 46 million in the United States or, by 39.4% of Internet users. In the Netherlands, 2 million, out of 7 million voters, who decided to participate in the 2002 elections, used an internet election guide [...]. Researchers however noticed, that these new forms of gaining information and political activity is much more often used by people well-educated, who engaged in politics before"[10].

Analyzing the results of the research on the communication of local leaders from the "Silesia" Metropolis cities, confronted with the outcome of research and analyses done in other countries, one can admit that Polish political leaders also use social media in their political communication. As in other countries, it is not a tool used to its fullest. Research confirmed that profiles or fan pages do not create a platform for local debate, nor do they activate local communities to larger election participation. Lastly, they do not, and this is an accusation towards the mayors based on a content analysis of their profiles and fan pages, expand the knowledge of local problems or activities that the government engages in. They are also not a place activating local communities around local problems, and this was the purpose that the communication of local leaders and the city administration using Facebook fan pages was supposed to serve. This is the role of new media in communication processes seen by Castells, additionally stating that communication on social network sites enables not only the platform for public debate, but also the control essential for the existence of democracy, especially on the local level. Meanwhile, as visible in research, only three city offices had engaging communication on Facebook (and only in Polish), while the city office in Ruda Śląska has an automatic redirection to their homepage. This supports a number of claims: lack of knowledge on the possibilities of this form of communication, and more importantly in the global aspect, also free promotion for the city, no proper reference to political communication with the environment, especially in the context of presenting local issues, justifying decisions, explaining current problems, which could, due to their public presentation, become an issue for public discussion. Finally, marginalizing this form of activating local communities for goals that would be attainable also in actual reality. It seems

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[10] Ibidem, pp. 153–154.

that not using these possibilities is one of the reasons why social media, and Facebook, do not create engaging political participation, e.g. taking part in elections. The quoted new media scholars – Dijk and Castells noted a relatively low influence of new media on creating the image of politicians or activating society in political communication processes, yet they claim that it is a state that is gradually changing. This means that activity in new media in the following years can significantly influence political communication processes, among them election campaigns.

Analyzing political communication on Facebook and showing the importance of the site for processes in a global, but also local scale, Mike Westling underlines, that due to this medium politicians have the chance to communicate with all the members of local communities, who are interested in listening to them, but at the same time, these very same people have a right to express their own opinions connected with governing on a local level. Searching for the grounds of using Facebook in such a way, Westling finds it in the definition of "public sphere" by Jűrgen Habermas, thus treating it as a place, where political communication between citizens takes place[11]. He points out that the possibilities Facebook gives – the leader can use his wall (place where information is published) as a local bulletin, paper, an informal gathering place and town hall meeting – can lead to discussions with those interested, regardless of the place in which they physically are.

Not without reason are discussions taking part on social network sites being called the new agora.

The research subject of this paper was not the analysis of Facebook communities activated during election campaigns. Westling writes about the role of these groups, claiming that they grant the possibility to create support groups for candidates, organize political events during American campaigns, or have groups critically debate about the candidate or his platform. These possibilities were the topic of the prior qualitative analysis of the author, done in a Facebook group – Wybory Samorządowe 2010 w Tychach (Local Elections 2010 in Tychy) (a few weeks after the elections, the group was deleted, it clearly had an election purpose and did not become a platform for debate during office). The group was created by one of the vice-mayors of Tychy (profile administrator), it had nearly two hundred users, mostly board candidates, mayors and people connected with the campaign staff and candidates. The group was open, there were no restrictions concerning adding posts to the

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[11] M. Westling, *Expanding the Public Sphere. The Impact of Facebook on Political Communication*. www.thenewvernacular.com/projects/facebook_and_political_communication.pdf [accessed: 8.01.2012].

wall. For an outside observer the group was united by discussions between users on election activity, content of the platform and election promises. For the average voter, not linked to the campaign staff, what might have been important was the possibility to follow events taking place during the campaign, publishing recorded debates, meetings and talks in electronic media, press publications as well as whole election programmes. It happened that especially interesting or funny YouTube videos were published on walls, not concerning the election in Tychy. Assuming that 100,000 citizens of Tychy were eligible to vote, among them many young or middle-aged, the degree of using social network sites in public debate and using the knowledge they posted, was rather low – both the number of friends the mayor had, people who "liked" the official city profile, and those generally interested in the election campaign taking place in the city (officially, there were 200 fans, which means that the profile itself was visited by more people interested, but for different reasons not inclined to "like" the *fan page).*

To summarize the above assumptions on the role of the social network site Facebook in political communication processes of mayors and the communication of cities in the Silesia Metropolis, there lacks, first and foremost, clearly defined aims which are to be achieved by this tool. Facebook was taken advantage of during election campaigns

An interesting case, which has been observed in research, is that cities making up the Silesia Metropolis generally don't use this form of communicating, don't have *fan pages*. Those which do have them, like Katowice, Sosnowiec or Tychy, have them only in Polish, not attempting to use them for communication promoting the city in English, thus global promotion. In both Katowice and Tychy, there live and work foreigners, people who often do not communicate in our native language and publishing information, also in English, would increase the usefulness of the information there.

Similarly, "Silesia" Metropolis has its fan page only in Polish (1298 fans – data from June 2nd 2011). Information published on their wall concerns the activity of Metropolis authorities, rarely events taking place in its cities, also other users write on the wall.

An analysis of the way "Silesia" Metropolis communicates using their Facebook fan page leads to the conclusion that – as in the case of communicating with society by individual cities making up the Metropolis – there is no idea for executing this communication, which it seems, should additionally create a network of virtual communication linking inhabitants of certain cities of the GZM. Resembling coherent information transfer, which could shape one community. Collective communication and reaching a social consensus in the Metropolis

should become a best practice, especially in terms of building and using infrastructure – communication and transportation, or the planed building of a combustion plant.

Challenges which stand before local politicians, connected with the development of communication using new media, among them social network sites, require changes in attitudes and realizing their importance in communication as an ongoing process, which should be a dialogue with our environment, and not activities using Internet tools in propaganda messages during election periods. Kaja Tampere points to one more significant element from the point of view of the political communication processes in a democratic society, which is building trust in dialogue, necessary for the proper functioning of democracy[12]. It seems that accepting this goal – trusting authorities and the decisions made by them – as one of the basic ones, will at the same time help define the rightful place of communication using new media in the process of political communication as a whole.

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[12] K. Tampere, *A walk in the public relations field. Theoretical discussion from a social media and network society perspective*, *"*Central European Journal of Communication" Vol. 4 (2011), nr 1, p. 59.