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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING PROTESTS ON MAIDAN

Grażyna PIECHOTA - Robert RAJCZYK

ABSTRACT:
Political protests which took place in Ukraine were another example of how social and content websites were used during protests on the Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) in Kiev – the protests started in November 2013 and ended in February 2014. This article offers presentation of the results of research that was carried out in Kiev and Lviv in May 2015 among students of two Ukrainian universities: Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and the National University of Taras Shevchenko in Lviv. The aim of the conducted research was to establish which of the new media (social media and blogs) and in what way were used by the students during protests and if the way of using the new media influenced the engagement of students in protests. Such comparative research also made it possible to find differences in attitudes and motivations of students participating in protests in Kiev but coming from two different cities in Ukraine – Kiev and Lviv. The research results may contribute to a deepened analysis of the ways the new media are used during political and social protests with reference to differences in people's attitudes depending on their personal or Internet engagement.

KEY WORDS:
social media, political protests, social protests, Ukraine, Maidan Nezalezhnosti, Orange Revolution

1   Introduction

Social media are becoming more and more important during political or social protests. Their role is not only informative, as they take part in the process of conveying messages in countries with authoritarian or quasi-authoritarian regimes, where mass media usually support the state system, but they also play a role of integrating citizens around issues that are important for them, mobilising them to take up actions and showing the scale of the protest. Gemma Edwards claims: "New media have changed the nature of mobilization processes, the tactics available and the cost involved. They have given rise to a growing sector of 'indymedia' (independent media), for example, enabling activists to film events as they happen on their mobile phones and upload them to YouTube or narrate them on Twitter."[1] The true power of social media as an information carrier and the channel enabling citizens to integrate, at the same time presenting the scale of protests, revealed itself during the Arab Spring. Protests that started in Tunisia in 2010 led to political and social revolutions in a few North African states. Even the attempts at limiting the influence of the new media – particularly such services as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube – by disconnecting the Internet access (as was the case in Egypt

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1   EDWARDS, G.: *Social Movements and Protest.* Cambridge : University Press, 2014, p. 63.

or Libya) were not able to stop the revolution which started on the Internet.[2] Gemma Edwards mentioned the role of Facebook and Twitter during Arab Springs: " People share information, Facebook pages, set up by young people in support of the protesters and publicizing the brutality of the police response to them, help to raise awareness of the oppression of Egyptian people and point towards the wider corruption of the regime."[3] Another example of the protest that had its source in the social media was the one that broke out in May 2013 on Taksim Square in Istanbul, where the local community protested against the plans of development of Gezi Park. Garland claims: "The participation in 'a moment' is the nature of protest/events; the above quote is neatly illustrative of that and the way that in the example it cites, a very 'activist' or 'movement' event becomes much more open-ended and 'unparticularized' by absorbing the interest and participation of the wider society in the city in which it occurred."[4] After a few weeks protests spread to other parts of the country and the authorities decided to limit access to Facebook and YouTube, knowing that protesters spread information via these channels. Roscigno and Danaher point out that " if activists want to influence public perception then they inevitably have to engage with the media and shape the messages that are communicated." In other words, they must get their stories told and their ideas heard.[5] Today, this role of people conveying the information is played more and more often by the social media. Manuel Castells mentioned that the new media create a new platform of public space: "New media have become a crucial platform not only for battles between movements and counter-movements, but in providing activist-created media content that gives them journalistic control over the message and the way to quickly diffuse their chosen frame to millions of users on sites like YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and tumblr."[6] However, China, for example, constantly limits access to the Internet at the same time creating alternative, moderated communication channels outside global networks such as Facebook, in order to censor information and monitor content sent by users.

Social and content websites were also used during protests on the Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti) in Kiev (protests started in November 2013 and ended in February 2014). They led to the change in authorities and the removal of President Viktor Yanukovych from office. Traditional media, particularly TV channels in Ukraine, were subjected to the authorities or were owned (and they still are) by Ukrainian oligarchs. Information disseminated via the new media counterbalanced the news that was available in the traditional media.[7] Short before the events on Maidan Nezalezhnosti an independent Internet television channel was established (currently it is also a TV channel) – hromadske.tv (on 24th June 2013 the number of people liking the fan page of the television on Facebook was 381 000 users). The Internet TV was established as a result of raising monetary contributions on the Internet, i.e. crowdfunding. Castells points out the increasing role of mobile communication during protest events. He claims that "information and communication can no longer be controlled by the state. People communicate directly with others using the Internet and social media. This communication is going on in real time, is interactive and personalized – people are the source." Castells indicates the new role of mobile communication – "you are always on".[8] Protests in Ukraine between 2013 and 2014 were not the first ones that were initiated there using the Internet. Earlier in 2004, after the second presidential vote, when the opposition activist Viktor Yushchenko was the winner according to the exit polls and the official winner turned out to be Viktor Yanukovych who was supported by Russia, the so-called Orange Revolution (Ukrainian: Pomarancheva revolyutsiya) broke out. Also then the protesters gathered on Maidan summoned via the Internet and mobile phones, protesting against electoral fraud. Orange Revolution was considered the first protest organised with the use of the Internet.[9] The authors do not share this opinion,

as even before some political protests had been organised with the use of the Internet and mobile phones, e.g. in Serbia. According to Andriy Ignatov, one of the organisers of the protest: "In order to cover a larger audience, we had to attract our target audience from people who are usually better networked than the rest. We strived to reach investigative journalists, human rights lawyers, entrepreneurs and students. In short, we wanted to reach the most networked people in Ukraine."[10]

As protests in Ukraine in 2004 are believed to be the beginning of 'online' protests, it has been deemed necessary to carry out a deeper research into the use of social media during protests in Kiev in 2013/2014. The subject of this article is thus the presentation of results of research that was carried out in Kiev and Lviv in May 2015 among students of two Ukrainian universities: Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and the National University of Taras Shevchenko in Lviv.

2 Research Methodology

The basic aim of the presented research was to get to know the attitudes of students of two Ukrainian universities concerning their use of the social media during protests on Maidan Nezalezhnosti (later called Maidan). The subject of particular interest was finding answers to the following research questions:
1. What social media channels did the students use during protests on Maidan Nezalezhnosti in Kiev and for what purpose?
2. Did the way of engagement of students (direct participation in protests or indirect support for the idea of protest) influence the way of using the social media? If so, how?
3. Which relationships initiated by students during protests were primary – online relationships (friends of friends), or relationships started in person, which were then transferred to the Internet?

The following research hypotheses were formulated:
1. Students used social media mainly for spreading information and not for creating content.
2. The level of students' participation in communication processes in social media was the effect of their engagement in the ongoing protest – students taking direct part in protests were more engaged.
3. The use of the social media was aimed at spreading information created by opinion leaders and integrating users around this content.
4. Students entered into new online relationships with users they met during real events (first the meeting, then starting the relationship on social media).

The hypotheses that were put forward and the resulting research questions, in the researchers' opinion, made it possible to not only get to know the attitudes and motivations of students in choosing the new media that they used during protests, but also made it possible to analyse relationships established with the use of the new media. The aim of the research was also revealing the specific character of communication with the use of the new media by showing relationships between the attitude of students during protests and their direct engagement in the protest. Analysing the use of the new media in protests that took place in Ukraine, the researchers also drew attention to the use of blogs as a specific channel of Internet communication. The survey carried out among students of two cities (Kiev and Lviv) also made it possible to create a comparative platform for analysing communication with the use of the new media by people directly participating in protests and drawing information from the Internet.

The research was carried out with the use of a survey questionnaire translated into the Ukrainian language, on randomly selected groups of students, i.e. three hundred people in each university where the survey took place. In all, six hundred survey questionnaires were distributed. The surveyed students were aged 17-23 and they studied different majors – arts, social studies, and (natural) science. Random selection of

2   More in: PIECHOTA, G.: *Media in Election Processes*. In Communication Today, 2011, Vol. 2, No. 2, p. 46-48.
3   EDWARDS, G.: *Social Movements and Protest*. Cambridge : University Press, 2014, p. 224.
4   GARLAND, CH.: As Barriers Fall, Contingency Becomes Possibility. Protest Resisting and Escaping Containment and Categorization. In LAMOND, I. R., SPRACKLEN, K. (eds.): *Protest as Events. Politics, Activism and Leisure*. London, New York : Rowman&Littlefield International, 2014, p. 121.
5   ROSCIGNO, V. J., DANAHER, W. F.: *Media and Mobilization; The Case of Radio and the Southern Textile Worker Insurgency, 1929-1934*. In American Sociological Review, 2001, Vol. 66, No. 1, p. 21-48.
6   CASTELLS, M.: *Mobile Communications and Society: A Global Perspective*. Cambridge : MIT Press, 2006, p. 185.
7   More about the development of citizen journalism and cyberactivism in Ukraine in: ORLOVA, D.: *Ukraińskie dziennikarstwo rok po Majdanie*. [online]. [2015-06-26]. Available at: <http://pl.ejo-online.eu/polityka-medialna/wolnosc-prasy-2/ukrainskie-dziennikarstwo-rok-po-euromajdanie>.
8   CASTELLS, M.: *Mobile Communications and Society: A Global Perspective*. Cambridge : MIT Press, 2006, p. 211.
9   GOLDSTEIN, J.: *The Role of Digital Networked Technologies in the Ukrainian Orange Revolution*, The Berkman Center for Internet&Society at Harvard Law School, Research Publication No. 2007-14, December, 2007.
10   Quoted in accordance with: SEIB, P.: *Real-Time Democracy: Politics and Power in the Social Media Era*. New York : Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, p. 145.

students means that in the period when the survey was carried out (in Kiev – from 12th to 15th May; in Lviv from 17th to 22nd May) the researchers showed up on different faculties, randomly chose groups of students during classes, explained the idea of the research, assured anonymity and asked to fill in the survey questionnaire. It sometimes turned out that students asked additional questions about the aim of the research and the use of the data collected. According to researchers, particularly in Kiev, students asked these questions out of curiosity but they were also afraid of being identified; the more so that scholarly studies published earlier (this had also been established in the research) quoted migrations of communication processes from one service to another, what was also the effect of monitoring the content of messages by special services of Russia, mostly in case of the most popular social website in Ukraine – VKontakte (a Russian social website).

3 Research Results

Out of 300 questionnaires distributed among students in Kiev and 300 distributed in Lviv, 298 were returned in each city. In Kiev 82.55 % of the research participants who took part in the survey were women and 17.45 % men whereas in Lviv there were 70 % women and 30 % men.[11] Six respondents in Kiev answered that they were not interested in what was going on at Maidan (five women and one man). In Lviv one man answered that he did not know the reason for Maidan protests and one woman was not interested in this issue. In Kiev personal participation in Maidan protests was declared by 35.02 % of students, including 27.95 % women, and in Lviv 40 % of the respondents took an active part, including 62 % women.

The research results that are presented below have been divided into two subsections – first, containing the answers of students from Kiev and Lviv who directly participated in protests (and used the social media for communication) and second, where answers of people who did not participate in the protests but declared that they gathered information about the protests from social media were analysed. In a few questions students were able to give more than one answer. Data are presented as percentage values.

3.1 Results of the Research Concerning Students Directly Engaged in the Protests

In the group of students from Kiev taking part in Maidan protests (104 people), 96 declared using the social media and in Lviv 112 out of 113 people present on Maidan confirmed using the social media (in the following part only answers of people engaged in Maidan and using social media were taken into account).

*Diagram 1 & 2: Using social media channels by students during Maidan (Kiev and Lviv)*
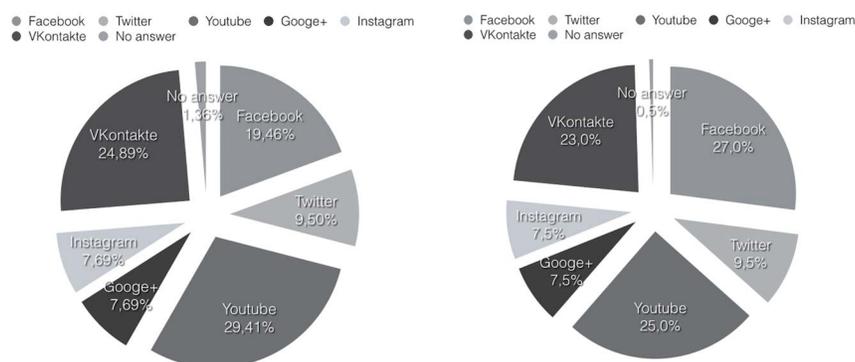
Source: own processing

Preferences of students concerning the choice of communication channels in the new media are shaped according to age. The choice of the most important channels made by students in both cities was more or less the same. The most popular channels in both Kiev and Lviv were YouTube, VKontakte and Facebook. Among eighteen and nineteen year olds Youtube and VKontakte were more popular than Facebook, which dominated in declarations of students over twenty. Older students more often used Twitter in Lviv and less often in Kiev, where Twitter was the most popular medium among students aged 18 to 20.

Diagram 3: Purposes students used social media for during protests (Kiev and Lviv in %)
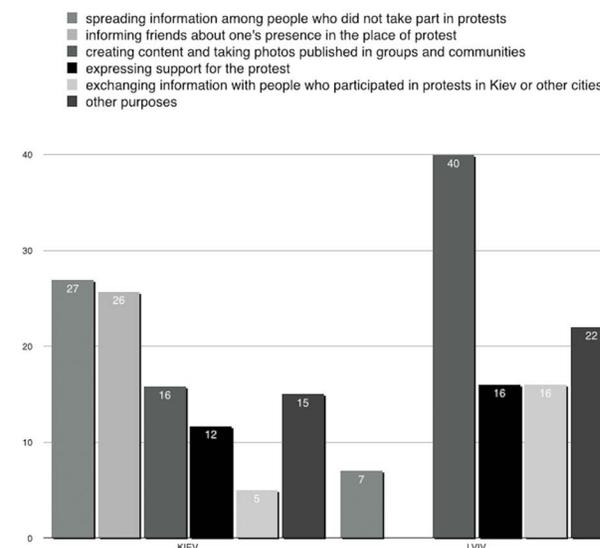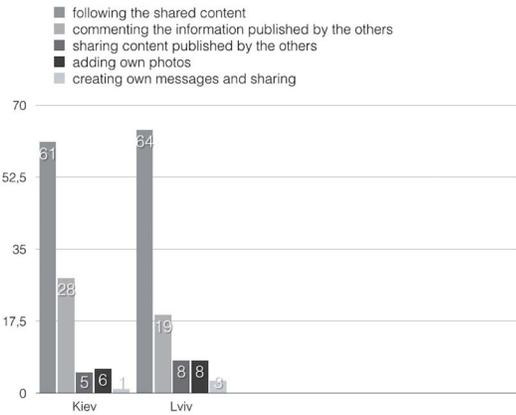

Source: own processing

The research participants in Kiev and Lviv used social media for different purposes. For students in Kiev the most important purpose was to spread information to people who did not take part in the protest and to inform friends that they were present there during protests. The least important purpose was using social media as the channel of exchanging information with people present in Maidan and other places of protest in Ukraine.

For students in Lviv, on the other hand, it was important to create content and take photos that they published on the Internet, also in groups or communities they were members of. Students did not declare that it was important for them to mark their presence in the place where something important had been going on (where protests had taken place). Students from Kiev and Lviv marked the answer 'other purposes', for which they had used social media during protests. In the survey they were not asked to quote those purposes.

Students were also asked if they had joined any new groups or communities that had been devoted to the protests. In Kiev 81.19 % students confirmed that they had joined such groups or communities during protests (in Lviv 83 % of respondents), 18.81 % denied doing so (in Lviv 13 %). In Lviv 4 % of students did not remember if they had joined any groups or communities. Asked about the issues those groups or communities were devoted to, students the most often declared (Kiev 88 %; Lviv 86.17 %) that they had joined the groups that supported the ideas and values promoted during Maidan.

They also stated that they had followed the groups or communities which had promoted protests and values declared during Maidan, but also the ones that had negated the ideas expressed by protesters (Kiev 9.52 %; Lviv 13.83 %). The attitudes of both groups of students (from Kiev and Lviv) concerning membership in groups and communities were quite similar but in the case of students from Kiev almost 2.5 % of the respondents declared that they had only joined those groups that had negated values and ideas promoted during Maidan.

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11   Proportions of participation of students in the survey reflected the proportions of students regarding sex. In arts and social subjects the majority was female; in science faculties the percentage of males was higher.

Diagram 4: Activity of students in groups or communities (in %)

- following the shared content
- commenting the information published by the others
- sharing content published by the others
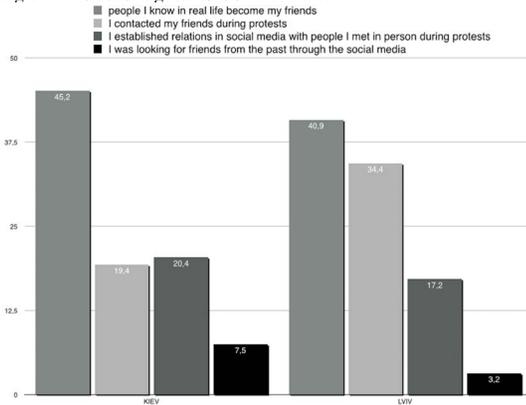- adding own photos
- creating own messages and sharing

Source: own processing

In the period when the survey was carried out (May 2015) 53.33 % of students in Kiev and 69.39 % of students in Lviv declared that they were still members of these groups or communities. 68 % (Kiev) and 64.38 % (Lviv) of those who remained in groups or communities they had joined during Maidan confirmed that the issues a given group had been devoted to during the protests were still discussed there. On the other hand, 28 % of students in Kiev and 28.77 % in Lviv declared that when the protests had ended the issues discussed in the group had changed. 4 % of students in Kiev and 6.85 % in Lviv claimed that they were no longer interested in the issues published in groups or communities they still belonged to after the protests had ended.

The respondents were also asked if – under the influence of information that had reached them through the social media during protests in Maidan – they had taken up any actions quoted in the questionnaire. Answers of students from Kiev and Lviv differed here. Students from Kiev the most often declared that they turned up in places where the protesters had gathered, like students from Lviv. They also mentioned that they had provided financial support called for with the use of the social media and signed virtual petitions and other calls. The smallest number of people said that they had shared the content connected with the protests on the Internet, what made them different from the actions taken by the students in Lviv who, on the other hand, declared that they had shared content connected with the protest and also financially supported crowdfunding called for on the social media. The smallest number of people in Lviv declared that they had signed petitions or other appeals on social media. The answers of students in both cities were distributed in the same way, regardless of the sex of the respondents.

Diagram 5: Establishing relations on the Internet

- people I know in real life become my friends
- I contacted my friends during protests
- I established relations in social media with people I met in person during protests
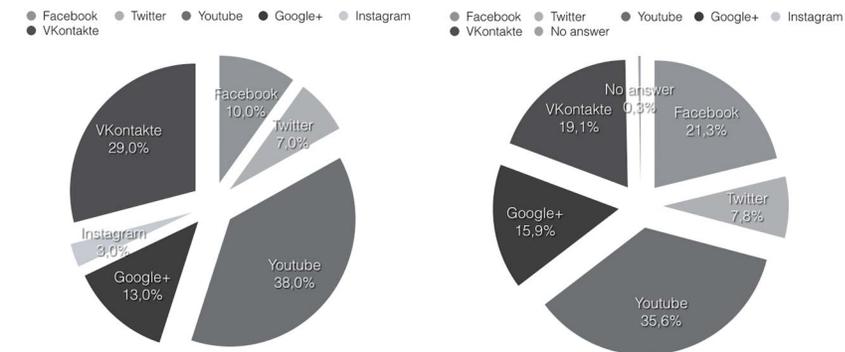- I was looking for friends from the past through the social media

Source: own processing

Students' answers indicate that they established relationships with people they knew in person. Much fewer people declared entering into relationships with virtual friends of their friends or looking for friends from the past. The answers were distributed in the same way for both sexes. This means that students tend to transfer relationships that they have established in the real life to the Internet. During protests they first created personal relationships, later transferring them to the Internet and they were not prone to establish relationships with friends of their friends who they did not know in person. Research also revealed that students from Lviv who had participated in Maidan in Kiev had used social media to contact their friends during protests in a much more intensive way than respondents from Kiev. Probably, the social media were the channel of communication with friends in other cities – also in Lviv, and the participants played a role of emissaries who informed their friends about the events on Maidan.

3.2 Research Results Concerning Students Who Did Not Take Part in Protests and Used Social Media to Obtain Information about Maidan

Diagram 6 & 7: Using social media channels by students in connection with obtaining information about Maidan (Kiev, Lviv).

- Facebook ● Twitter ● Youtube ● Google+ ● Instagram ● VKontakte
- Facebook ● Twitter ● Youtube ● Google+ ● Instagram ● VKontakte ● No answer

Source: own processing

In the group of students who were not directly engaged in protests on Maidan but they looked for information about the protests in the social media were 154 people in Kiev (40 stated that they had not used the social media) and 180 in Lviv (5 people stated that they had not used the social media).

The choice of social media that were used for obtaining information about the events on Maidan is similar, regardless of sex. However, when we juxtapose social media channels used by students of different ages, it may be noticed that in all age groups in each city YouTube was the most popular. Interest in other channels changed according to age – among younger students VKontakte was more popular, for older ones it was Facebook (only in Lviv, as in Kiev this relationship was not identified). In the case of people who used social websites for communication and not only for analysing content, the importance of Facebook and Google+ grows, as these are alternative channels to the most popular service in Ukraine – VKontakte (observed in Lviv, in Kiev VKontakte was still more popular). As mentioned earlier (see footnote 11), and what was also emphasised by Katie Kusenok[11] during protests on Maidan some users stopped using VKontakte[12] for two reasons – first, because the content of the website was monitored by Russian special services; second, because the changing orientation from pro-Russian to pro-Western made the young people using social websites during Maidan change the used communication channels.[13]

Students, who had not taken part in Maidan but had declared using the social media during protests, were also asked what information they had been interested in during protests. The largest number of people thought that what had happened during Maidan had been important so they had been interested in what had

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12 VKontakte is a Russian social website, visually similar to Facebook – vk.com
13 KUSENOK, K.: Multilingualism on Social Media in the Maidan Movement. In SCHREIBER, W., KOSIENKOWSKI, M. (eds): *Digital Eastern Europe*. Wrocław : Kolegium Europy Wschodniej, 2015.

been going on there (Kiev 76.33 %; Lviv 86.56 %). Other respondents also declared that they had been interested in finding out whether their friends had been present there or not and what they had been doing there (Kiev 22.33 %; Lviv 13.13 %). Four people in Kiev (1.34 %) and one person in Lviv (0.31 %) stated that they had been interested in cultural life going on in Maidan (concerts) and they had been looking for such information via social media.

However, nobody in both cities stated that the information provided by the social media had been more reliable or more up to date than in the traditional media. This information is not really surprising – students prefer information provided via the Internet, because they often not even follow the traditional media. Declarations of students' preferences were the same for both sexes. But when these data are analysed according to the age of students, research reveals that regardless of the age, people following information on social media were guided by interest resulting from the fact that what happened in Maidan was important for the public. The older the students, the lower the interest in following whether their friends were present there and in what they did.

The last part of the questionnaire concerns the analysis of the engagement of students who took part in writing blogs, followed content published on blogs of other people and used blogs for sharing information about Maidan. Student responses revealed that about 9.93 % of students in Kiev and 7.94 % of the respondents in Lviv had had their own blogs, among them more women (Kiev 7.09 %; Lviv 3.97 %). 63.48 % of students in Kiev had read blogs kept by other users, as well as 60.22 % in Lviv – including 52.84 % women in Kiev and 42 % in Lviv, respectively. In the group of people reading blogs in Kiev 59.36 %, and in Lviv 67.42 % declare that the published content concerned protests on Maidan.

Conclusions

Research confirms hypotheses put forward by the authors. Students who were present during Maidan used social media mainly for spreading information. Creating content was declared by a smaller group (students from Lviv dominated in it). Also in groups and communities that the students joined, only very rarely they pointed to creating content – their activity was usually limited to following information created by others, rarely commenting and the least often sharing content on their own websites.

The research also reveals that students did not use the social media as channels of building new relations with strangers, but they mainly transferred their real life contacts onto the Internet. The obtained data thus confirms the thesis of tribalism proposed by Michel Maffesoli.[14] According to Maffesoli, the development of internet communication and its mass character helps to create micro groups that bring together similar individuals – tribalism/tribal closeness. Also David Barney, writing about the projects of identity in the network society, mentions the essence of identity (that is manifested in bringing people together in groups) and the new media that make it possible not only to identify identity, but also to horizontally communicate between entities. He also follows Castells's notions and emphasises the role of identity of resistance – growing from objection, exclusion or being the opposition against the necessity of compliance. As he claims, identity on the Internet is liquid, changeable; the individual can possess many identities and change them. The Internet creates communities.[15] Students – both from Kiev and Lviv – declaring participation in the protests and at the same time participation in groups or communities whose issues were devoted to protests on Maidan, emphasise that they chose those groups or communities which supported the ideas and values promoted during Maidan (Kiev 88 %; Lviv 86.17 %). According to declarations of students participating in the survey, most of them still belong to groups and communities that were created during protests on Maidan – many more students from Lviv (almost 70 %) than from Kiev (slightly over 50 %). We might look for an explanation for this variation in different motivations of students from Kiev and Lviv to participate in the protests. In both cities the research reveals slight differences in attitudes of students – between those who personally took part in Maidan and those who drew information about Maidan only from the social media. Social media were used for spreading informa-

tion mainly by students from Kiev – they declared that they had transferred information to people who had not been present on Maidan and had informed friends that they had been there, when something important had happened. On the other hand, students from Lviv who declare their presence on Maidan in Kiev point out that they mainly created content (also in the form of photos) which they published on the Internet, they exchanged information with friends who were outside Maidan and showed their support for the protest on the Internet. Differences in the attitudes of students from Kiev and Lviv which have been found, may be the evidence of different attitudes towards protests that took place on Maidan and thus highlight also other motivations of students (this issue was not directly tested). Students from Lviv belong to the part of the Ukrainian society which is oriented on the process of integration with the European Union (understood as a geopolitical community). Moreover, if they had wanted to participate in protests on Maidan, they would have needed to travel to Kiev, what was rather the evidence of certain determination to take part in the protest. While participating in the protest they created their own content, taking part in creating information for other users not directly engaged in the protests. However, some of the students from Kiev, who declare their presence on Maidan, in their understanding could have taken part in a certain event that took place in their city, informed their friends about it and marked their presence on selected social media channels. As Garland claims: "Protest can be seen as a crystallisation of 'actually existing' societal discontent and antagonism, which is more or less visible in a specific time and place, becoming an event in the process. Protest as event is, in this sense, one in which barriers fall and the contingency of different agents – none more so than those 'in' or 'outside' an (anti) political milieu – are dissolved by collective action, communal endeavour and the shared thrill of opposition and resistance."[16]

Differences in using social media are also visible in a situation when students did not directly participate in protests but they gathered knowledge about them using social media channels. Students from Lviv were first of all looking for the news about the situation and the course of protests, whereas students from Kiev were more often looking for information that concerned their and their friends' presence on Maidan. Differences could also be noticed in choosing channels in social media that were used by students. Students from Kiev and from Lviv much more often declare using YouTube, which means that they were interested in information presented as audiovisual contents. YouTube was not such a popular channel for students from Kiev and Lviv who directly participated in the protests. This regularity may result from the fact that the respondents who took an active part in protests were eye-witnesses, so confronting what they had seen with their own eyes with the message on the social media was not important for them, they were convinced about the reliability of content posted on the social media because it was produced by the participants of the events on Maidan Nezalezhnosti. It is also worth pointing to the specific character of the message that is currently dominating in the media. On YouTube the spoken or written word is superseded by the image that requires no comments – particularly in the case of such events as these that took place on the central square of Kiev from November 2013 to February 2014. The key role in communication via pictures on the social media is played by the reliability of the sender, which directly influences the reliability of the very message. In other words, referring to the specific example of Hromadske.tv or Espreso.tv, materials posted on social media and on the Internet by journalists of both channels – as may thus be supposed – were deemed unquestionably reliable. It is worth mentioning here that the content media were used for reporting the course of events but usually without any comments. In social media, on the other hand, content was made up of information concerning e.g. certain in-kind aid for the protesters, statements of participants, reports of the injured and information about the events (here dominated Twitter, which was used to reach users from outside of Ukraine). Such a diversification of content may be first of all explained with an integrative function that was implemented by the social media and the campaigning function in the case of the content media.

Blogs were the carrier of information which the respondents declared reading, not being too much engaged in writing them. Moreover, students also pointed that they read blogs whose content concerned the events on Maidan. This means that obtaining information about Maidan, they used different social media

14   MAFFESOLI, M.: *Czas plemion*. Warszawa : Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2008.
15   BARNEY, D.: *Społeczeństwo sieci*. Warszawa : Wydawnictwo Sic, 2004.

16   GARLAND, CH.: As Barriers Fall, Contingency Becomes Possibility. Protest Resisting and Escaping Containment and Categorization. In LAMOND, I. R., SPRACKLEN, K. (eds.): *Protest as Events. Politics, Activism and Leisure*. London, New York : Rowman & Littlefield International, 2014, p. 121.

channels. Students from Lviv were more interested in reading blogs about Maidan. Blogs, qualified as citizen journalism already in the 1990s, in Ukraine were carriers of information independent from state control and influence of oligarchs. According to Philip Seib, on the one hand blogs provide emotional comments (emotional power of quasi-journalistic storytelling), and on the other, they may also misinform, containing more fiction than facts.[17] The content of blogs is made up of subjective messages and they are not supposed to meet the same criteria as journalist messages. The value of blogs, what John V. Pavlik emphasises, is the emotional message expressed with passion.[18]

To sum up the considerations above, the role of social media in protests is important and has a significant growth potential. It is enough to mention that with a few exceptions all students who took part in the survey declared using the social media (for different purposes) as communication channels during protests. The example of using the Internet only in Ukrainian protests in the last 10 years shows us that the importance of the Internet is growing, making the protests more radical and treated as special events. According to Sinikka Sassi, the new media play an important role in creating the civil society and they influence the transformation of the public sphere.[19] The research shows that a large group of students from Kiev treated the events on Maidan as a special event where they marked their presence. Being present at an important event which was watched by the whole world was valuable for students (what does not exclude that they knew what the protests meant and supported them). Such a use of the social media confirms that events they create are, to a certain extent, shows held in the public sphere and the social media serve the purpose of informing and gathering the people interested in them in one place. M. Castells mentioned earlier about this role of the social media, as creating the policy of shows.[20] As was mentioned above, the growing importance of the social media (as distribution channels for information but also for comments, mainly in blogs) in the process of shaping the public sphere is noticed by John V. Pavlik, who emphasises the importance of discussions that took place in the blogosphere.

The analysis of particular important protests happening since 2010 and the outbreak of the Arabian Spring make it also possible to state that it is the global channels of social media that are important in terms of spreading information, creating communities, integrating and mobilising users to take up collective actions. This happens due to the limited possibilities of moderating content and following the activity of particular users and because of certain ambitions of the protesters to spread messages that will have a potentially global reach thanks to global communication channels. Action leaders during Maidan also pointed to the same thing.[21]

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