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Mediji i komunikacije

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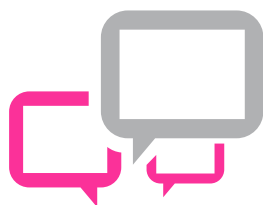
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Interactivity research among the Austrian, Croatian, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian, and Lithuanian MPs

Abstract: One can explore a number of different reasons behind politics' partial move to the internet, but one of the most important reasons is that the citizens expect politics to be represented on the internet. At the same time we should not forget that new technologies enable politicians to provide news quickly and flexibly nonstop (Bimber – Davis 2003: 49). Some of the MPs are using this opportunity, some of them are not. News posted by the politicians can barely be commented or changed by the users in their original place. Our international research team took one step back and we decided to investigate the email for the subject of our research.

Key words: *interactivity, e-mail, ICTs, multipoint-to-multipoint communication, political communication*

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Istraživanje interaktivnosti austrijskih, hrvatskih, estonskih, mađarskih, letonskih i litvanskih poslanika

Apstrakt: Moguće je istražiti niz različitih razloga djelimičnog premještanja politike na internet, ali jedan od najvažnijih razloga je taj što građani očekuju da politika bude zastupljena na internetu. U isto vrijeme ne smijemo zaboraviti da nove tehnologije omogućuju političarima da pružaju vijesti brzo i fleksibilno bez prestanka (Bimber – Davis, 2003: 49). Neki od poslanika koriste ovu priliku, neki od njih ne. Vijesti koje objave političari jedva da se mogu komentarisati ili mijenjati od strane korisnika na izvornom mjestu. Naš međunarodni istraživački tim se vratio jedan korak unazad i odlučili smo da za predmet našeg istraživanja uzmemo e-mail.

Ključne riječi: interaktivnost, e-mail, ICT, multipoint-to-multipoint komunikacija, političke komunikacije

Introduction

To date, most of the research around social networking is based on youth and how young people interact with new technologies. There is a strong sub-text of 'marketing' and business oriented approaches that include research around "choice" and how people develop choices around their interactions with social media. This is mostly superficial "cause-effect" research. The research for the most part is based on what consumers of technology seek to use to further facilitate the convenience and/or ease of their lives.

Another wave of researchers has appeared in political and communication science in the past two decades, who have highlighted the involvement of citizens in the democratic process. Their studies suggest that new forms of civic dialogue are born in front of our eyes, which fundamentally changes the well-known forms of the public sphere (Barber, 2003; Bohman, 1996; Chambers, 2009; Cohen, 1996; Dryzek, 2002; Moy – Gastil, 2006). The scientific interest focuses on the interactivity and explores the internet rather than mobile forms of communications. From the initial characteristics of the users of technology, starting from the white, around 35-year-old men in the nineties the focus has shifted to the more diverse demographic groups of today. The traditional pressure groups are able to mobilize their members at lower costs or to contact the political organizations using emails, viral videos, websites, etc. Margolis – Moreno, 2009: 32–37). However, not only the traditional pressure groups, but individual citizens also can interact with their representatives or officials of the government much easier (Bimber, 2003). The analysis of the relationship between the citizens and the politics has gained great popularity with Barack Obama, after the 2008 election campaign. The presidential election in the United States has become very fashionable since, unlike in previous campaigns, the Obama campaign staff used the new ICTs consciously to organize citizens (cf. Libert – Faulk, 2009; Merkovity, 2009). The same happened with case studies about the Italian Five Star Movement (cf. Bordignon – Ceccarini, 2013) or the 'Arab Spring', with the difference that compared to US elections and the Italian example, in the 'Arab Spring' the citizens were the initiators (cf. Imre – Owen, 2014). We can speak about heightened political atmosphere in both cases. While in the Obama campaign the elections caused the unusual forms of social actions, in the "Arab Spring" it was the disgruntled civilians, whose word did not want to be heard by the political leadership. However, the question arises, what about the normal days when politics and the citizens are living they everyday lives? Should we expect that politicians will hear the voice of ordinary citizens? Do the new ICTs promote the interaction (cf. Merkovity, 2014)? First, we have to examine the role of new ICTs in political communication from a closer perspective and must understand the term of interaction to answer these questions.

From multipoint-to-point networks to interaction

The channels of communication have been multiplied in the last two decades. The process of change in communication is, among others, also marked by the increase in multipoint communication. The rituals of communication, especially the rituals of conflict and the consensus in communication, 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.

In practice, the multipoint-to-point network means that the processes of social and political events mainly take place in the mass media. In fact, people are excluded from the active processes of social communication in mass media. Today, with the convergence of traditional media and digitalization multipoint-to-multipoint networks are established. This brings us to the world of interactions, where the concept of interaction is a rather 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 (Stromer-Galley, 2004: 391). Therefore it is necessary to define the meaning of this interaction. Several definitions were made on interaction, but Spiro Kiousis's interpretation is bringing us the closest to understand the concept. Kiousis (2002) thought that in order to be interactive, the medium must include two-way communication where the roles of the message sender and receiver are equal and commutable, the speed of communication should be in or at least close to real-time, and include third-order dependency, which is in control by a third party (e.g. supplier). Following this logic, the email cannot be classified among interactive media in any case, because days or weeks can go by between the sent mail and its response. Thus, by Kiousis's definition of interactive medium, the email is not considered to be interactive, but it carries the possibility of interactivity.

Sally McMillan (2002) gives a user oriented interpretation of interaction. She distinguished three forms: user-to-system, user-to-user and user-to-document interactivity. The first assumes a one-way communication, where users can only download or click. User-to-user interactivity means versatile communication, such interactivity takes place on the internet forums. This type of communication can be unidirectional or bidirectional, depending on the initiator's purpose of the interaction. The user-to-document communication can be observed at blogs, where the user can convert the document with commentary, for instance, thus becoming active co-author.

Researchers came to the conclusion that politicians are trying to avoid the user-to-user and user-to-document interactivity, because they can prevail the unexpected consequences with the citizens (Tedesco, 2007; Williams et al., 2005). Meanwhile, citizens like the forms of interaction beyond user-to-system kind of

communications. Stromer-Galley and Foot (2002) concluded that people like to receive response from the politicians.

The “Interactivity Research Project”

Our research team is conducted three research projects to analyze the interaction of the members of the parliaments (MPs) on the internet. The first one was a pilot research, where the MPs’ email use was examined. The second analyzes politicians’ use of Facebook, while the third the use of Twitter. The results from the last two are still being processed.

The main aims of these research projects are:

1. To identify the ways in which networking technologies have been used by political actors/representatives to communicate their goals, policies, political arguments.
2. Quantify response rates of political actors/representatives by measuring the amount of response.
3. Qualify the type of response, biases in responses.

Central research question is what are the effects of networking technologies on political communication? This question can be divided into three parts. First, what do we know about MPs’ interactivity on new information and communication technologies? Discourses on the new ICTs and political communication can be traced not only in political science and communication research. It is a recent development that beyond many other fields, internet studies, cultural anthropology and democracy research in general are also discussing these issues. Therefore, it is necessary to have a summary of political communication research in a broader sense, in which one can analyze the results of these ‘neighboring’ fields in a comparative way.

Second, how the MPs are using the internet, especially the communication networks? More precisely, what are the characteristics of political systems’, particularly the elected representatives’ use of new information and communication technologies? The first aspect of the second question means the analysis of the political system in an international environment. On one hand, this contains the attitude of political actors towards the new ICTs, how they use them, the mapping of national characteristics in case they can be identified, and the study of the political spectrum characteristics (especially party families). On the basis of the references, it could be expected that the weaker, extreme right, green and other single issue parties are more open to the new ICTs than the stronger parliamentary parties with old traditions, while the second aspect of this question highlights the unused possibilities of ICTs in the world of politics.

Third, is revolution or evolution happening in political communication? The third section is devoted to integrate the results about the political system and citizens into a unified system. According to our expectations the new ICTs will not

revolutionize political communication, what we see is a 'spectacular' development, adaptation to the information environment, which process is sometimes faster, other times slower. This makes one feel like what has been well-functioning in political communication in the past few years is now becoming obsolete.

Finally, the main aim of this article is to support the above mentioned general targets with the results from the pilot (email) research, but also to analyze 'incidental' results, such as the gender gap in received emails and the disinterest in responsiveness of ruling and opposition parties to research group's emails. The following chapters will introduce the applied methods and the results of the email research.

The applied research method, the expected results and the limitations

Within the framework of our empirical research, we have sent an email to every member of the Austrian, Croatian, Estonian, Hungarian, Latvian and Lithuanian Parliament at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012. Every country was between two election campaigns. We sent our mails from three separate Gmail accounts and introduced ourselves as researchers, who are examining the representatives' opinion on smoke-free law. We wanted to know how many representatives would answer our letter within a two-week period. Finally, we sent 1056 emails and answered less than 10% of the MPs. We decided to send our emails as a research group and not as an ordinary citizens, because it would rise ethical questions if we introduce ourselves as a quasi civilian. Furthermore, we could have hoped in higher responsiveness as researchers – since the MPs would know that they are 'under observation' – if we had sent the mails as citizens. As can be seen from the above, our expectation did not justify by the results.²

As a next step, we listed the answerers, the composition of parliamentary groups and gender. On the basis of this, we could outline the profile of the responding representative. We expected that the typical answers will come from women who are members of the opposition, while the least responses will come from the members of the governing coalitions. Our initial expectation was that the members of opposition parties, mainly the smaller parties will use this opportunity for communication to introduce their policy, while the female representatives proved to be more active in our previous research (Merkovity, 2014); we expected similar results in this research, as well.

Naturally, the interactivity or the responsiveness of MPs could not be demonstrated on the base of one email. As we already mentioned, the email research is part of a greater research project. Therefore, the results from this research could be considered as a results of an experiment, since the authenticity of the conclusions are valid only 'here and now'. For instance, new question, new parliament or new logic of the research would result different outcome in responsiveness. This

² It is worth mentioning that researchers had a previous, similar project, analyzing the response rates of Hungarian representatives to the emails where they introduced themselves as ordinary citizens, but the responsiveness was not significantly higher in their research (Merkovity 2014).

study represents only a single element of interactivity, this is the main limit of the research and the results should be evaluated with this in mind.

Results

We sent total of 1056 emails to the MPs of Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania and got back only 52 responses. The total number of MPs is higher than the total numbers of sent emails, 1062 directly elected MPs are sitting in parliaments of these six states. The reason for this that 6 seats were empty during the research, two seats in Croatia, one in Estonia, one in Latvia, and two in Lithuania. The results from our research are the following:

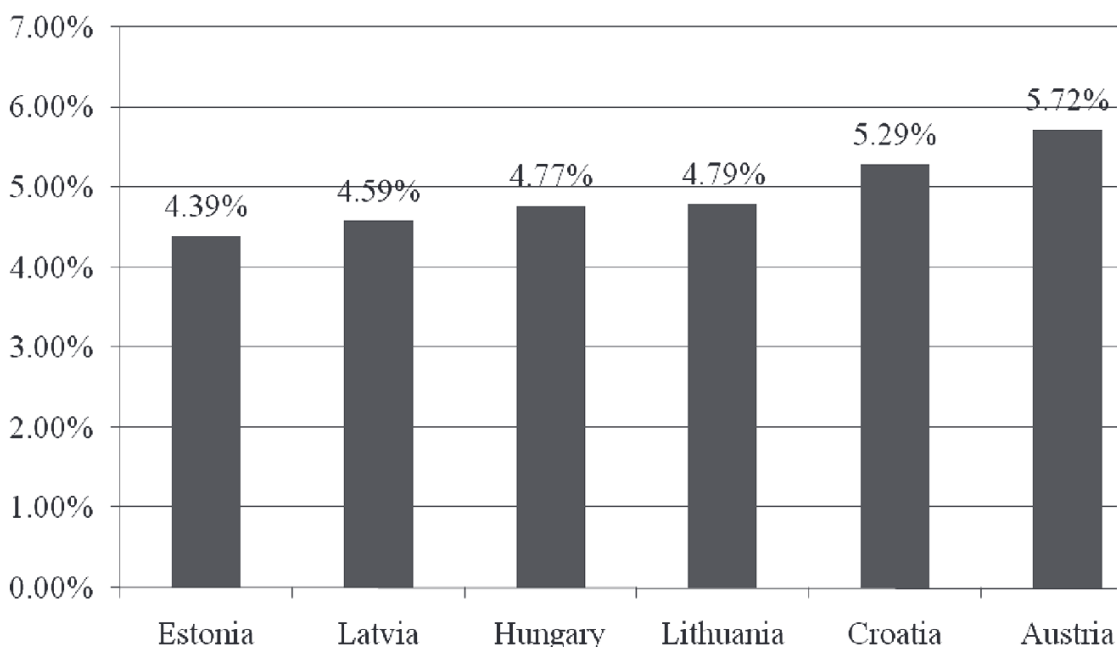
Table 1. Received responses

Country	Number of MPs in parliaments	Sent mails	Responses	Response rates
Austria	183	183	2	1.09%
Croatia	151	149	4	%
Estonia	101	100	10	
Hungary	386	386	20	%
Latvia	100	99	8	8.08%
Lithuania	141	139	8	
Total	1062	1056	52	

As the table shows the MPs' response propensity was very low. The highest response rate is produced by the Estonian politicians (10%), while Austria has the lowest numbers (1.09%) with only two responses. Table 1 support the fact that in our 'experiment' politicians consider emails as a mainly user-to-system interaction. However, it would be a mistake to make general conclusions on the basis of six countries and one email. In fact, these numbers are showing only the numbers, but they make the comparison of countries difficult. For instance, the 20 responses from Hungarian MPs is the highest number in responses, but the response rate is just 5.18%, putting the country on the fourth place. No need to explain that 10 answers out of 100 MPs lead to better results in response rates than 20 answers from 386 MPs.

We will get more realistic results if analyze the numbers without a country. The results were calculated as follows: first, we extracted the total number of the received answers from the number of answers received from a particular state. Second, we extracted the total number of the sent emails from the number of sent emails to a particular state. We calculated the proportions by using the two results. For example, according to Table 1 we will get the Austrian results if we subtract Austrian responses (2) out of total number of responses (52). We will get the total number of responses without Austria (50). After this we will subtract the sent mails to Austrian MPs (183) out of total number of sent mails (1056). The total number of sent mails without Austria is 873. By these two numbers, we could see the extent of responsiveness without Austria (5.72%). The greater is the calculated result, the lower is the response propensity of a particular country.

Figure 1 Response rates without a state



As Figure 1 shows, two countries' responsiveness reduces the average of response rates: Austria and Croatia. Estonia has the best result, while Hungary and Lithuania are close to the average response rate (4.92%). Still, we cannot say that Estonian MPs are more likely to response emails, while Austrian representatives not. This brings us to the limit of the research. We do not know how many emails actually reached the members of the parliaments. We also do not know how many were read by the MPs' staff. As we wrote earlier, we introduced ourselves as members of an international research team in our mail, but we did not use institutional email account. This element could be suspicious for the MPs and their staff, who have to be careful with doubtful requests, which could come from their enemies,

as well. This is why we should handle these results as trends. These trends will be able to show us other correlations in the analyzed countries. We could extract other information, if we continue to analyze parliaments and received responses. One of these is the question of gender; the second question is the ruling and opposition parties.

Gender

Austria, Croatia, Hungary and Lithuania have no state law for gender quota, but some of the parliamentary parties have their own regulation. This does not mean that the biggest parties in national assemblies have this kind of regulation, sometimes the smaller parties, typically the green parties or other left-wing parties have gender quota. There are no unified norms on female quota in analyzed countries. We found no rules for this question in Estonia and Latvia while the proportion of female representatives is among the highest in these two countries (21% in Estonia and 23.2% in Latvia). Although, it should be emphasized, that gender quota means nothing if the female candidates do not get places on the “winning side” of the electoral list in case of proportional electoral system, or do not get “friendly constituencies” in case of single-winner voting system. The gender quota will serve as a symbolic issue for the parties in above mentioned situations, but not as a mechanism to ensure equal entry to the parliament. In some situations, even in countries with no quota could be higher the number of female representatives than in countries where the quota is employed by some of the parties. (Table 2 shows which countries have quota employed by some of the parties and it presents the proportion of female representatives.)

Despite that Hungary has quota employed by a party, the proportion of female representatives is the lowest among the six countries, only 34 women from 386 representatives were sitting in the parliament during the research. The reason for this is that the smallest party in the National Assembly, the LMP – Politics Can Be Different was the only which had gender quota. Since we already know that we got 2 responses from Austrian and 4 from Croatian MPs, we can guess that the least responses will come from these countries’ female politicians, but we got no response to our email. We found no reason why we did not receive answers from Austrian and Croatian female representatives. Both countries have quota employed by the parties and both have relatively high number of female representatives. According to Table 2, we could also expect that the female MPs of Hungarian Parliament will be the last after the Austrian and Croatian politicians.

Table 2 Female responsiveness

Country	Type of the quota	Number of female MPs	Responses	Number of replies from female MPs	Female responsiveness	Female MPs responsiveness in relation to the number of responses
Austria	Employed by a party	52	2	0	0%	0%
Croatia	Employed by a party	35	4	0	0%	0%
Estonia	No quota	21	10	1	4.8%	10%
Hungary	Employed by a party	34	20	3	8.8%	15%
Latvia	No quota	23	8	3	13%	37.5%
Lithuania	Employed by a party	27	8	1	3.7%	12.5%
Total		192	52	8	4.16%	15.38%

We only got a total of 8 responses from female members of the parliaments. The results could be compared in two ways. The first way analyzes the total number of responses. If we analyze only the female responsiveness, then we will see that from a total of 192 female representatives we got back 8 answers, which means average of 4.16% response rate. It makes easy to calculate the male MPs average response rate: 44 responses from 864 MPs is 5.09%. These numbers are misleading. We must state that it is easier to get 44 responses from 864 MPs than 8 from 192, but this does not prove that female MPs were more active than male politicians. To prove this we must leave out the two states with the lowest numbers, Austria and Croatia, stating that their totals of 6 responses are not interpretable in this calculation, since we got no answers from female MPs. In this case we got a total of 619 male MPs with 38 responses, that means a total of 6.14% average response rate. While in the case of female MPs we got 8 responses from 105 representatives and the average response rate would be much higher, 7.62%. According to this, we proved the trend that female MPs are much active than male politicians.

The second way analyzes the female MPs' responsiveness in relation to the number of responses. From these data we can see the performance of each country's female MPs. If we neglect the Austrian and Croatian results, we can see that

it is not Hungary that has the worst responsiveness as we expected, but Estonia and Lithuania. While the best responsiveness come from a country with no gender quota, from Latvia. This result proves that the existence of gender quota means nothing in the frame of this research. The interactivity of (female) MPs does not depend on state or party regulations. It depends on openness to new information and communication technologies. However, it must be recognized that according to our research most female and male MPs could be more interactive. Although, some of the MPs were interactive in our research, the lack of interactivity highlights one unused possibility of ICTs in the world of politics.

Ruling and opposition parties

The second aspect of comparison is the response rate from governing and opposition parties. It is not surprising that the number of MPs in governing parties is higher than the number of opposition parties. The situation is the same as in the case of female and male politicians, it will be easier to get higher number in responses from the ruling parties than from the opposition parties. But, if we get more answers from opposition in one country, it would imply that the governing parties' interactivity was lower in that state. The results for this comparison are indicated in Table 3.

Table 3 Ruling parties and opposition parties

Country	Number of MPs in ruling parties	Responses in from ruling party MPs	Number of MPs in opposition parties	Responses in from opposition party MPs	Responsiveness of ruling parties	Responsiveness of opposition parties
Austria	108	1	75	1	0.93%	1.33%
Croatia	80	2	69	2	2.5%	2.9%
Estonia	55	7	45	3	12.73%	6.66%
Hungary	263	9	123	11	3.42%	8.94%
Latvia	55	6	44	2	10.91%	4.55%
Lithuania	79	8	60	0	10.12%	0%
Total	640	3	416	19	5.16%	4.57%

Here we found the only result where we could speak about regional differences. The responsiveness of ruling parties is higher in the Baltic States, while the response propensity of opposition parties is higher in Austria, Croatia and Hungary.

We could see only in one country, in Hungary that the number of responses from opposition is higher than from the ruling parties. Here the response rates are 2.6 times higher for opposition. The responses are equal in Austria and Croatia, but if we calculate the response rates, we could see that the results are better for opposition than for the governing parties in both states. The situation is reversed in Estonia and Latvia, where the responsiveness of opposition parties is around 2 times lower from the ruling parties' response rates. The clearest situation is in Lithuania, where we got no response from opposition parties.

Once again, we have to state that these numbers are only indicating the trends in these countries, but according to these results we could conclude that the responsiveness of ruling parties is not as low as we expected. If we calculate the total responses from both sides, we could see that the responsiveness of ruling parties is 5.16%, while the oppositions' 4.57%. Although, the Austrian and the Croatian results are equal, the number of replies from these two countries improves the final outcome for ruling parties.

Discussion

The analysis of the research results is made on the simplest level, because they allow us to draw some conclusions in this form, they do not need statistical background to understand them. The general research has three main aims. First, to identify the ways in which networking technologies have been used by political actors/representatives to communicate their goals, policies, political arguments. The trends from the research show that the politicians' use of networking technologies is still at the beginning. This could be seen from the number of received responses. Although, the comparison of ruling and opposition parties shows that MPs in opposition could work much harder on their online communication skills. Second aim was to quantify response rates of political actors/representatives by measuring the amount of response. This result is most visible in Figure 1. It shows that in average 1 from around 20 MPs will answer to emails. However, the results could be different if we repeat this research during the election campaigns or if we change the subject and/or the email address of our mail. The third aim was to qualify the type of response, biases in responses. We conducted this qualification in tables 2 and 3 and concluded that albeit we did not have too many responses, some differences could be found behind the numbers. According to these results and seeing 'incidental' results from the email project we are able to answer the research questions.

The first question was the following: what do we know about MPs interactivity on new information and communication technologies? Since we were analyzing only the interactivity, more precisely the responsiveness to our particular emails, we can give only partial answer to this question. The trends from this research show that the responsiveness of MPs is low between two elections. The results indicate that email is a tool for user-to-system type of communication. Propositions like telephone messages, emails, and even text messaging are increasingly being

used to convince potential voters (Dale – Strauss, 2009) are misleading. These tools are not strengthening the bidirectional communication. Their goal is to mobilize voters and not to interact with them. The candidates could achieve by this the four practices to be central to web campaigning: informing, involving, connecting and mobilizing (Foot – Schneider, 2006), but it looks that these are not primary practices between two campaigns. The most MPs email address can be acquired on national parliaments' websites and on parties' or personal homepages, but these email addresses do not confer automatic right of entry into a dialog with the politicians. They are rather "exhibition items" that are there only for the eyes not for the hands. The situation is ambivalent, the members of the parliament are pretending that they are available for the citizens, but – 'here and now' – this research proved otherwise. Politicians are using network technologies like email for their revelation.

However, we must protect MPs, as well. The results from this research are limited, we cannot say that the statement from above is true for every politician and we cannot say that same results will come from every other democratic country. This also means that we have to accept Kiousis definition of interactive medium, and conclude that the email is not an interactive medium for politicians between two campaigns, because it is not used for two-way communication where the roles of message sender and receiver are equal and commutable. To answer the questions of what happens during a campaign or do the MPs use other (mainly social) networking technologies as interactive medium is not the subject of this study.

The second question was about the MPs' use of internet. What are the characteristics of political systems', especially the elected representatives' use of new information and communication technologies? This article analyzes two characteristics, the question of gender and ruling-opposition parties. We saw that female representatives are more likely to answer our mails. However, we have to state that the differences are not significant. Responsiveness was low both in results of female and male MPs. Regarding the ruling parties versus the opposition parties we saw that the results are mixed. We even found one regional specialty. Governing parties were more willing to response than opposition parties. This would suggest that the politicians' communication is on the beginning of fragmentation. We already experienced that "with an increasing number of channels and the success of the internet, there is also a fragmentation of audiences and means of communication, forcing politicians and political parties to be much more often 'on air' to reach as many people as twenty years ago" (Brants – van Praag, 2006: 30). Now, after the fragmentation of audiences, the communication of political actors started to fracture, as well. A wide variety of MPs' availability – from postal address to email, from public forums to social networking sites – reached that the politicians are not able to communicate daily (or weekly) on every channel. There is a tendency that some of them prefers social networking, while others still continue to insist the traditional ways of communication.

The unused possibilities of ICTs in the world of politics are the employment of technologies as a tool for two-way communication, where the concept of interactiv-

ity is not only an empty frame. The politicians need to change their attitudes toward the new technologies, because “there is the tendency of online communication to be most energetic, productive, and satisfying across horizontal lines of interaction” (Blumler – Coleman, 2010: 148). The vertical communication (present communication of politicians) is mostly top-down communication, where the established political communication happens that is frustrating and well-known for the citizens (cf. Blumler – Coleman, 2010).

The third question asks, are the new tendencies revolutionizing or developing political communication? Is it revolution or evolution? The article would be too optimistic to claim that the analyzed results are indicating revolution in the world of political communication. We could see nothing else, but evolution. However, exclusive use of traditional communication channels by MPs is obsolete, but this kind of interaction is still here to stay. Although, “electronic media have a huge advantage over face-to-face, telephone, or print media mobilization tools, where there is, or can be a substantial cost per additional unit being reached” (Vissers et al., 2012: 153). The political marketing and the need of cost-efficiency could change this slow evolution into a rapid revolution.

On the other hand, some of the citizens still prefer face-to-face or print mobilization tools. It seems that politics has recognized this. Both Obama campaigns (2008 and 2012), the Italian Five Star Movement or the Arab Spring used the new technology a lot. But the real success of their ICT use was that they were able to mobilize their followers not only in online space, but in offline world, as well. This could mean that if we want to find any revolutionary event in political communication, then we should reformulate our expectations about online campaigns. The online political communication is not revolutionary, but the use of online political communication for offline purposes revolutionizes this specific field of politics.

The answers to these three questions bring us closer to the central research question, what are the effects of networking technologies on political communication? During our research we found three effects that can be understand under the credo ‘here and now’. The first effect is globalization. The old media already globalized the world of politics, but the networking technologies are continuing this effect. We saw from the research’s results that response rates of the six analyzed countries, the question of gender and in a certain sense the comparison of ruling and opposition parties are very similar to each other. The rate of politicians’ interactivity is low and the unused potential of new technologies is very similar in analyzed countries.

The second effect is the change of media logic. There is no real answer from the theory of media logic to multiple media channels, fragmentation of audiences and rising electoral instability. The internet carries the possibility to the electorate to successfully change the direction of communication, while the political actors are trying to follow their voters offering them a variety of communication possibilities (e.g.: email address, social networking sites, etc.). These communication possibilities contain only traces of the old media logic. The media logic is changing. As

Strömbäck concludes: “The Internet is thus not guided by any one [party or media] logic, but includes many and competing logics” (Strömbäck, 2008: 243).

The third and the last effect is development of political communication. The traditional political communication still exists, where techniques and tactics works on traditional media and electorate, but with fragmentation of the public sphere, the public itself, the media and the political actors the political communication is changing. New political communication is developing on the ICTs with fresher techniques and tactics.

Conclusion

We could conclude that – as the trends from results shows – the members of parliament in Austria, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia and Lithuania are not too interactive if we talk about the email. However, we found some interactivity that was more dominant from female MPs and from ruling parties. We have not detected any “national” characteristics, which could not be explained with the international trends. Although, we found one regional characteristic, the governing parties were more active in the Baltic States.

The research team has not fulfilled all expected project results. We could state that (a) the new ICTs pluralized social communication; therefore, it affected not only the citizens but the world of politics, as well, but we have only indirect evidence on this. More research should be made on politicians email use in these six and other countries, as well, to find direct evidence. (b) New political behaviors, institutional challenges themselves are forming the ever changing information and communication environment. This statement is true from the aspect of globalization and changing media logic of political communication, but from the aspect of evolution and low interactivity rate together with one-way communication (or user-to-system interactivity) the statement is false. Further research should be made on politicians social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter to find direct evidence. The following stages of this project are analyzing these social networking sites. Finally, (c) new theoretical dilemmas emerge, which requires new methodological approaches towards the thorough research of the field. The three effects of networking technologies on political communication that are globalization, changing media logic and new political communication are emerging theoretical dilemmas. New methodological approaches should be developed in further research.

The email research has not been finished yet. We will get more accurate answers to our questions – and hopefully to other questions as well – when we complete analyzes on other countries. These countries would be Australia, Canada, Montenegro, New Zealand, Switzerland and United Kingdom. The research team’s expectation is that the rate of responses would not change significantly, and it will prove the tendencies from the first half of the research. Further comparison should be made, as well. The composition of left-wing and right-wing parties could show some difference. We predict that the contrast between the ruling parties and the

opposition parties would not be sharp, but the answers from right-wing parties would be a bit higher than those from the left-wing parties. The reasons, why we are expecting these results are the following: (a) in most of analyzed and to be analyzed states' political culture suggest that the MPs from ruling parties would send a little bit more answers. (b) The number of right-wing MPs is higher in most of above mentioned countries.

The other parts of research project should be made on social networking sites and it would include most of the states analyzed in email research. The data from these investigations could confirm previous findings and they could result new conclusions, as well.

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