

# SOCIAL MEDIA IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: ALTERNATIVE OR MAINSTREAM?

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## *Abstract*

*Discourses on the new ICTs and political communication can be traced not only in political sciences 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. Therefore, it is necessary to have a summary of political communication research in a broader sense, in which one can analyse the results of these ‘neighbouring’ fields in a comparative way. According to the literature, the topic has not been discussed in such detail as of yet. We will analyze this topic in the chapter through our main question ‘is the social media still alternative or is it mainstream channel for political communication?’*

*According to our expectations the new ICTs will not revolutionize political communication, what we see is a ‘spectacular’ development, adaption to the information environment, which process is once faster, other times slower. This makes one feel that what has been well-functioning in political communication in the past few years is now becoming obsolete. The comparative analysis of Australian and Hungarian MPs’ use of Facebook will answer or question from the title.*

## **1. Introduction**

To date, a majority of 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 and while it is used regularly for marketing purposes by companies around the world, social scientists are becoming increasingly wary of the numbers produced by these sorts of surveys and data-mining tools. 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. Here we are measuring something entirely new in terms of examining how this technology changes (or not) political communication. This sort of political engagement, the communicative aspect in particular (neither the activist nor the policy aspect), in which representatives engage in delivering and receiving messages from constituents (multipoint-to-multipoint communication). We examine the literature of ‘old’ media in order to see changes of the new media landscape in the next two sections of the chapter. We understand new media as a tool for social engagement of the electorate in political communication, therefore the terms ‘social media’ and ‘new media’ are considered to be synonyms. Following the literature review we introduce findings from our empirical research of Australian and Hungarian members of

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the parliaments' (MPs') use of Facebook social networking site. In the final part of the chapter we argue that the social media is still an alternative media for the world of politics.

## **2. Manipulated 'Old' Media**

Politicians' role in the environment of old media is a well-known phenomenon. (1) They lead stories in political, sometimes the tabloid news. (2) They are in constant competition with newsmakers to have the best place in news feeds. (3) Also, they are in protracted conflict with other politicians to make dominant their point of view in news feeds. And finally, (4) politicians are continuously trying to set their own agendas. The first three elements aid politicians to construct the news for the audience, while the fourth aims to help in perceiving the information. In this sense the media is not only the channel, their formats could provide the grammar, syntax and stylistic considerations for media competence and for the public [3] [4]. Meanwhile, the media system has its own effect on political actors. The politics are more spectacular and more personalized than it was nearly 50 years ago. 'Horse-race politics' or 'video-clip politics' [1] [6] are the main organizing element of the news about the political scene. The arguments are shorter and more compact, the visual components come to the forefront, while sound bites are essential, and they determine the political happenings for the public. As such political actors appear to have 'cracked the code' of media. Using this knowledge of media logic, politicians are able to place their news and comments on the most effective part of the media industry. This phenomenon has the result of making political actors look like 'media jugglers' who can manipulate journalists and editors and even appear to be 'tricking' news media whenever they want.

The political communication techniques are quite similar on old and new media, the logic behind politicians' use of new media is quite different. According to Manovich, two cultural expressions can be distinct in comparing old and new media: the narrative and the database [23]. The narrative is chronological. It must have a well-defined context and audience. If the politician does their homework, clearly defines the context and the audience, then s/he will be able to successfully persuade or manipulate its voters. In the new media, the database is hierarchical, and politicians need to have a totally different approach from the old media. "The database organizes and presents data according to a preset value structure and algorithm" [22]. These features generate different landscape than it was in old media and the representatives need to define themselves in this new scene.

## **3. New Media Landscape**

New media has changed a previously well-known landscape. The new communication technologies affect the relationship between the actors of political communication. While in the past there was an hierarchy between the different actors, where the political system, media system, citizens/voters order could be set up, today's political system opening towards the citizens and the new networking of civilians has brought the two actors to almost the same level as that of the media.

The starting point for this section is that political communication can be connected with the emergence of mass democracy and mass communication, and here we further assert that new communication technologies lead to the democratization of the practice of political communication [19] [26]. These changes have taken place without any revolutionary change in the hallmarks of societies that forced the political system to give up its original role. Under ideal conditions, if we assume high and predictable economic and cultural development, for the change of political communication it is not necessary to change the socio-political arrangements, it is enough if the

technologies are changing, which are specifically affecting the daily lives of people [11]. It should be noted that the previous claim is only theoretical, and it is true only under ideal conditions. The practice is somewhat inconsistent with the theory, often accompanied by changes in socio-political factors, as well.

Where can we find these changes? Five general trends could be found, which express the change of political communication actors: decentralization (reminding us that the commonly expressed “there is no political campaign without media campaign” thesis seems to be disproved), openness (the statement that communication is created by the political system, where the media mediates between a political institution, the state and the citizens, is plainly incorrect), mobilization (plays an important role in efficiency), pro-am’s (the appearance of civilians who are able to generate professional results themselves and they do not need the help of former professionals), multipoint communication (a small group of citizens/voters also can communicate to a large publicity in such forms of communications) [24]. Altogether, these trends create a database-like network, where the communication and the interconnection work much faster as it worked in the environment of new media. Multiple channels, feedback and conversation are in the middle of this network, where the parties and politicians do not differ from movie stars, musicians or internet celebrities.

The new technology has a greater impact on stakeholders, other than the media. The mediums are converging with each other, which leads to a horizontal media. This means that news and events appear in the horizontal media, like newspapers, TV channels and recently mobile phones and the internet. In the horizontal media citizens can remix or mash-up the various pieces of information. With this view, we have arrived at the qualitative difference of today’s media [9]. The remixed or mashed-up version of the news might be different from what it was originally supposed to mean. Experts of political communication have to be aware of the reality of ‘remix’ or ‘mash-up culture’, and they have to adapt to the new challenges. This does not mean the total disappearance of the agendas. It means that the media system is approaching the citizens. There is no longer a sharp border between the two systems. Citizens are merging with the media system, having taken their first steps to take charge of the media system. This process and the information remixes and mashes up, just like the lost monopoly on agenda-setting that leads us to ‘agenda melding’. The agenda melding means groups of citizens who organize themselves around agendas, which may represent ways of seeing things, ways of doing things, or other unique ways of relating to the world. And all groups have agendas of issues, some formal, some more loosely structured [27]. The changes in the communication technologies can also affect the media, but the changes do not have the same direction as in the case of the political actor or the civilians. The role of the media is still important, it still supplies various groups with information, but it does not have the well known genres that we were previously accustomed to.

Citizens expect political parties to have their own web appearance, where different pieces of information are available about the party and its candidates. One of the most important expectations is probably that the programme of the party is freely available on the website. Yet, it has to be emphasized, that this is only an expectation, and it does not mean that the voters are reading these party programmes. Nowadays, the situation is similar in case of their presence outside the official online channels. People find those parties or candidates more sympathetic, who are representing themselves on social networking sites [7]. In Australia and Hungary, these sites are Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, yet at the same time, compared to the overall internet penetration, only a small number of users follow the political news. Nevertheless, it needs to be said that the political system moved and is still moving to the internet. 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 them to be on the internet. At the same time, we must not forget that new technologies enable politicians to take up the quick and flexible refilling of news 24 hours a day. With the appearance of the information and communication technologies, political communication has also gone through certain changes. “ICTs make enormous quantities of information available to the public. This change in quantity may result in a change in quality” [30]. This means that big sets of data have to be under control of parties or politicians to know how to reach out their voters.

In this landscape, the citizens have a more important role in political communication through new communication technologies. Nowadays, with the help of information networks, civilian networks are able to send immediate reactions to politicians and to economic entities, offices, celebrities, etc., as well. This is also true in the other direction, which means that everybody and everything, from politics to economy and culture, can belong to a network and create interactions with other networks. In the case of the users of new ICTs we can talk about inactive–active networks [24].

With the help of information networks individuals can easily participate in the formation of politics as actively as the media. The way in which users use the networks, determines to which group they will belong to. Active participants (or networks) are internet citizens, also known as ‘netizens’, who are familiar with the working methods of the social networks within their fields of interest, and in some cases they are also able to manipulate them. Inactive participants (or networks) are, on the other hand, more familiar with the offline sphere, which they can influence better. In the case of inactive participants, social networks are extensions of their offline lives. Thus they use the new technology primarily as a tool which helps them reach their external goals. Besides using them as tools, active participants also have goals within the networks themselves. We have begun learning the forms of online activity only just recently, but it seems that the rules of political communication are changing. There is a greater emphasis on civilians in the new political communication and in the era of new communication technologies. The role of civilians means political activity in today's political communication, where the activity is online or offline political participation, demonstrations and in the worst case riots (see connection between the social media and the Arab Spring or the latest happenings in Egypt also [21]). The value of these types of communications is that it fits everything, which brings them closer to their ‘destination’.

#### **4. Research: Australian and Hungarian representatives on the Facebook**

The following part of the chapter presents Facebook usage of Australian and Hungarian politicians who were elected members of the parliaments’ of the two countries in 2012/2013. During the research we were scanning the representatives’ posts through three months. We purposely kept ourselves from campaign periods and elections because in these terms the politicians’ communications usually intensify towards the voters. We examined ordinary weekdays. The examined period was from November 2012 to January 2013. This period contains legislature, intermission and holidays, too. In this period we were able to observe their post-writing frequency and country specifics.

This chapter is informed by a portion of research completed on sitting members of parliament (MPs) in a variety of countries. Here, we are selecting two countries as a point of comparison in order to develop our framework for examining the changing dynamics of social media and political communication. Our justification for a comparison of Australia and Hungary is threefold. First, the authors were living in the respective countries at the time of data collection, and our reasoning was that this was important to keep a ‘check’ on the day-to-day politics as we are quite close to analysing this on a regular basis. Second, we could then do a ‘test case’ of two dissimilar countries

to see if the data diverged a great deal or if we were getting some anomalous results. With a distinct difference in historical development, paths to democracy, and in quite different regional contexts politically, Australia and Hungary provide an interesting point of comparison in terms of social media usage and here, we can test the assumptions of the difference between countries and examine our primary interest in question of the 'levelling effect' of social media technologies. The third justification for the point of comparison, related to the first two, but taking our assumptions further, is to examine structurally difference countries to see if we get radically different, or indeed radically similar, results. Unicameral and bicameral parliaments, constitutional monarchy vs a post-socialist republic, and several socio-political differences such as GDP wealth, and so on, means that the two countries are structurally different in a myriad of ways. As a result this study should give us a good indication of where future studies and future data will possibly take us.

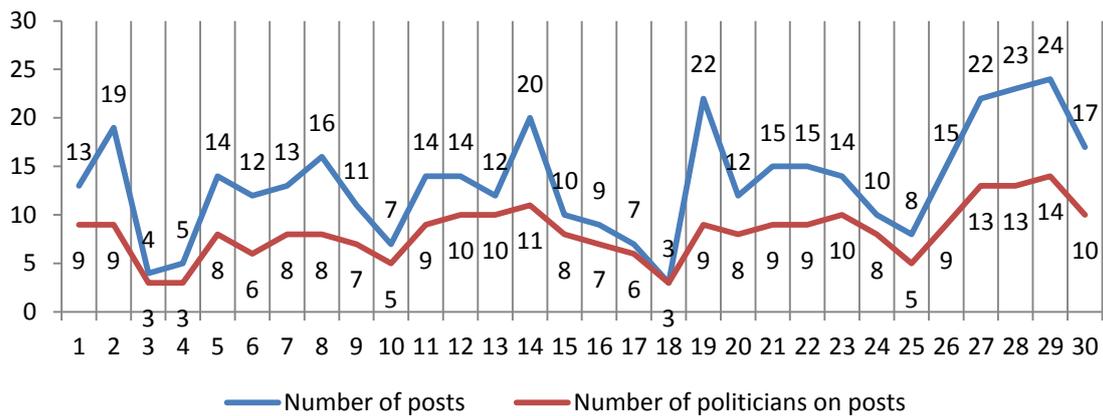
We could not examine all the members of the two parliaments' because not every MP has Facebook page. This is the reason that politicians in our study were chosen by the researchers. We were looking for representatives who are active on Facebook. This criterion means that they post several times a week (four-five posts a week).

We took 10 percent of the member of the parliaments. From 226 we analyzed 23 representatives from the Australian Parliament (8 members from the Senate and 15 members from the House of Representatives) and from 386 we studied 39 politicians from the Hungarian Parliament. The both sample consists prime ministers during the time of the research (Julia Gillard and Viktor Orbán), party leaders and representatives who are members of the government and politicians from the opposition, as well.

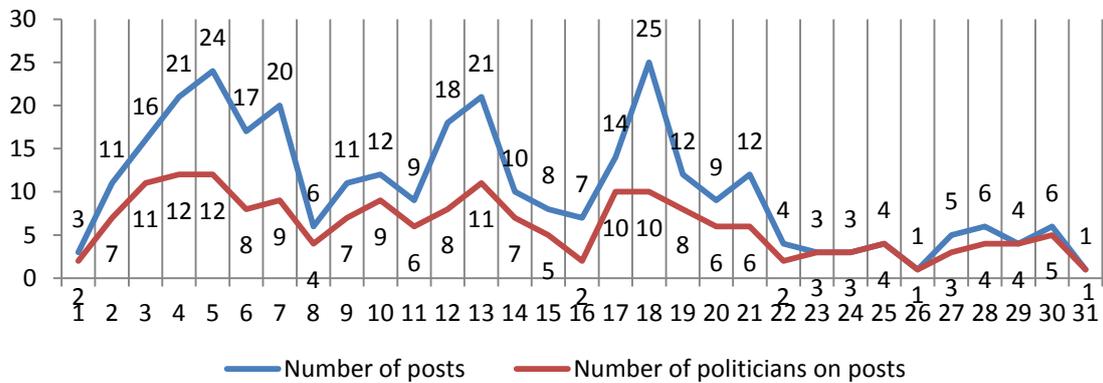
The generally known representatives – like party leaders – usually have Facebook profiles but we found some party leaders who have not, for example Antal Rogán who is the leader of the biggest party faction in the Hungarian Parliament, Fidesz, has not got Facebook profile or official page during our research.

During the three months of scanning we examined 4070 posts. The following diagrams represent data in different states and months. From the diagrams the blue lines show that how many posts are published on one day and the red lines introduce how many representatives were active on that specific day.

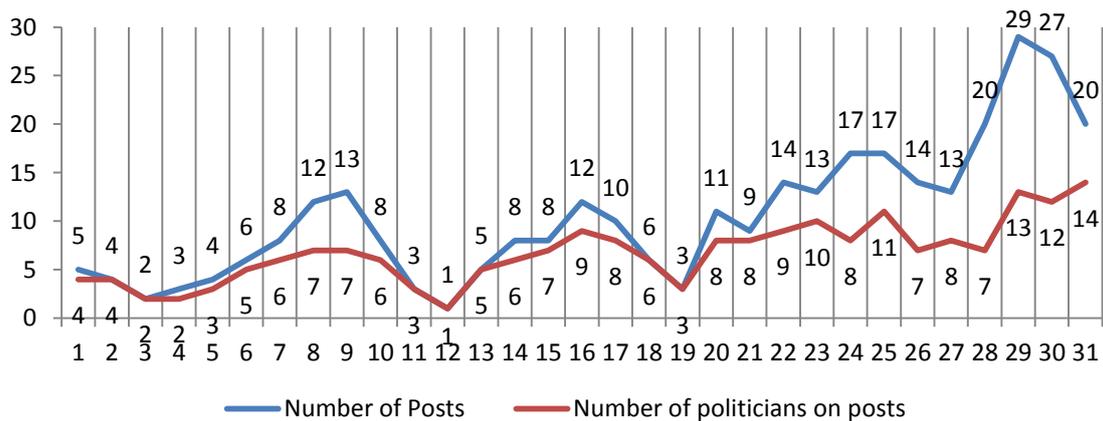
First, we introduce the Australian results (figures 1–3): the 23 Australian representatives shared 1048 posts during the mentioned months. In November 2012 they published 400 posts, in December over the same year they shared 323 posts and finally, in January 2013 Australian politicians did 325 posts. This means that there are 11.4 posts a day. We can determine from our sample that the not all the representatives post every day. Preferably, they do a post or more posts every other or third day.



**Figure 1. Facebook posts of Australian MPs in November 2012**



**Figure 2. Facebook posts of Australian MPs in December 2012**



**Figure 3. Facebook posts of Australian MPs in January 2013**

According to the Australian summaries the representatives are most active before the holidays, especially before Christmas. In this term they have got lots of official programs and this powerful activity slows down on the beginning of the holiday. In this period (from the last ten days of December to the first weekend of January) politicians are less active during the holidays. Over this same period the posts are more personal.

After the Australian report we introduce the Hungarian results (figures 4–6): the Hungarian representatives did 3022 posts over the same period (from December 2012 to January 2013). The difference may seem large but the two parliaments cannot be compared because they have different sizes.

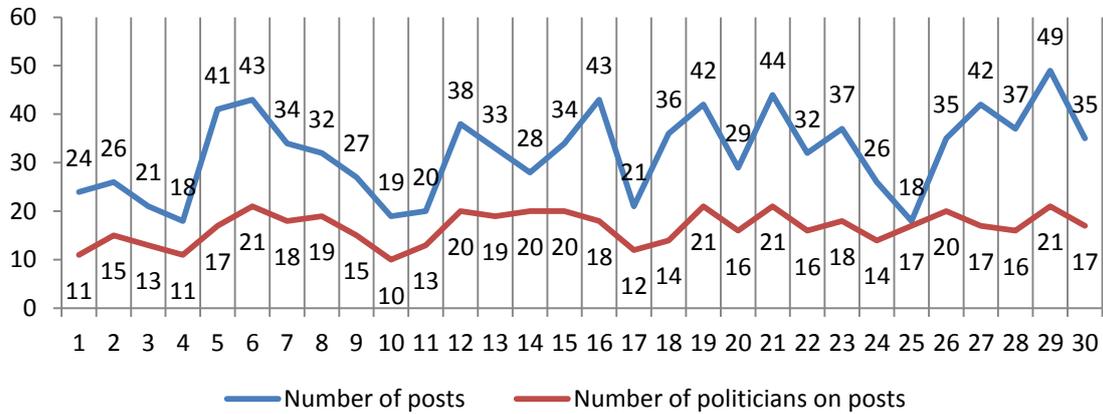


Figure 4. Facebook posts of Hungarian MPs in November 2012

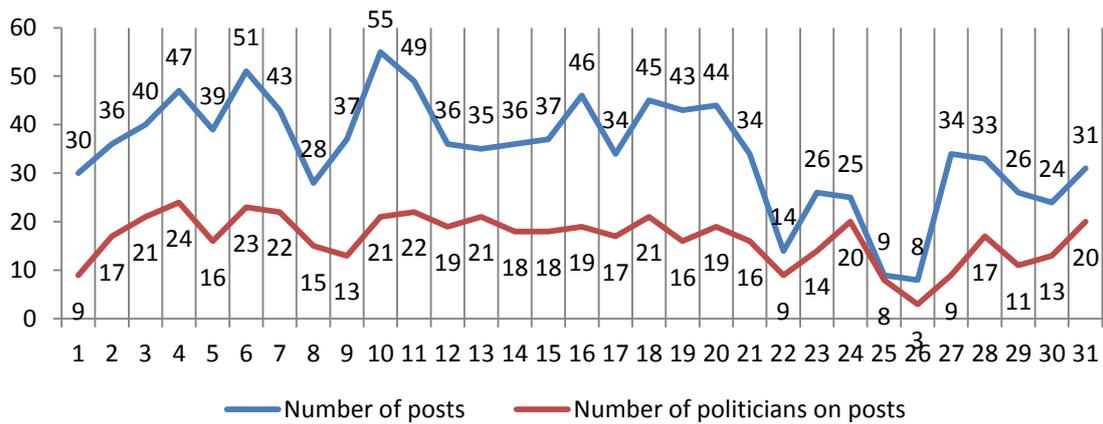


Figure 5. Facebook posts of Hungarian MPs in December 2012

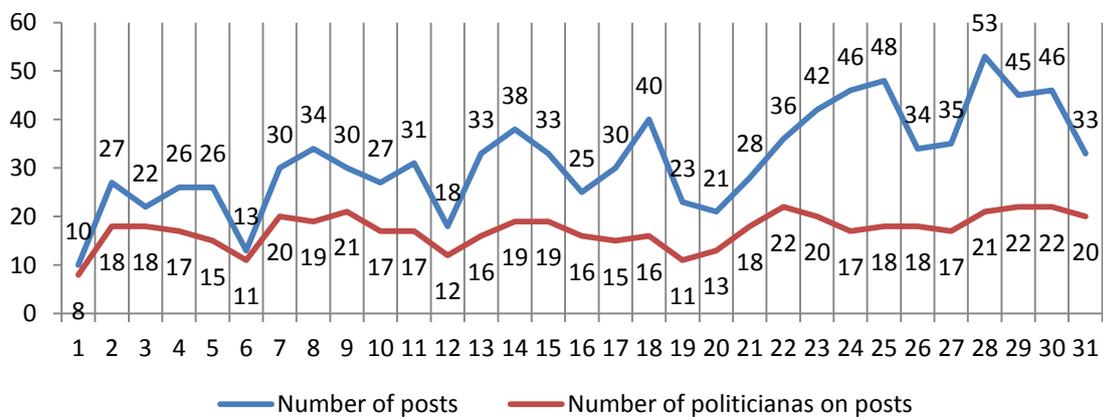


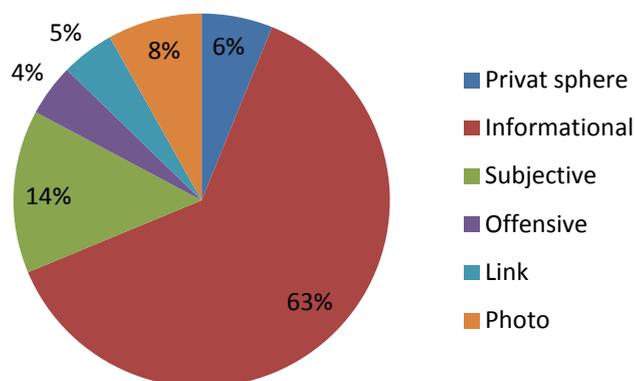
Figure 6. Facebook posts of Hungarian MPs in January 2013

In the case of the Hungarian politicians we do not see the Australian phenomenon: in November 2012 the representatives shared 964 posts and after that they were more active. In December 2012 they published 1075 posts and in January 2013 they did 983 posts.

The autumn sitting session was until 15 December in the Hungarian Parliament, but it is not visible on the diagram, the number of the posts and the number of the politicians who posted remained high. The activity only reduced during the holiday session (25-26 December). The Hungarian representatives rested in the first weeks of January. In this period they were less active than before.

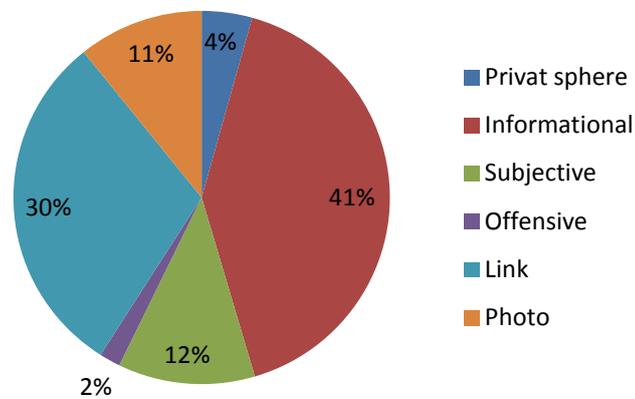
We examined the frequency of the posts and their nature, too. It means that we created categories and after collection of the data we ranked the posts. Our categories were: *private sphere* (shares on private life or family), *informational* (posts on events, interviews, official releases, etc.), *subjective* (the representative's opinion in a topic), *offensive* (insulting or hurtful remarks), *link* (shared link) and finally *photo* (photos and photo gallery without any remarks). With this method we were able to represent how politicians communicate towards their voters on the Facebook. The following two diagrams show that which categories are used by representatives.

The most Australian posts are informational, 63 percent. This result means that 23 politician shared 656 posts which connect their public life. The other five categories consist of the rest 37 percent: they posts 148 subjective messages, 85 photo posts, 64 private sphere notes, 48 links and 47 offensive comments. Figure 7 shows the percentages.



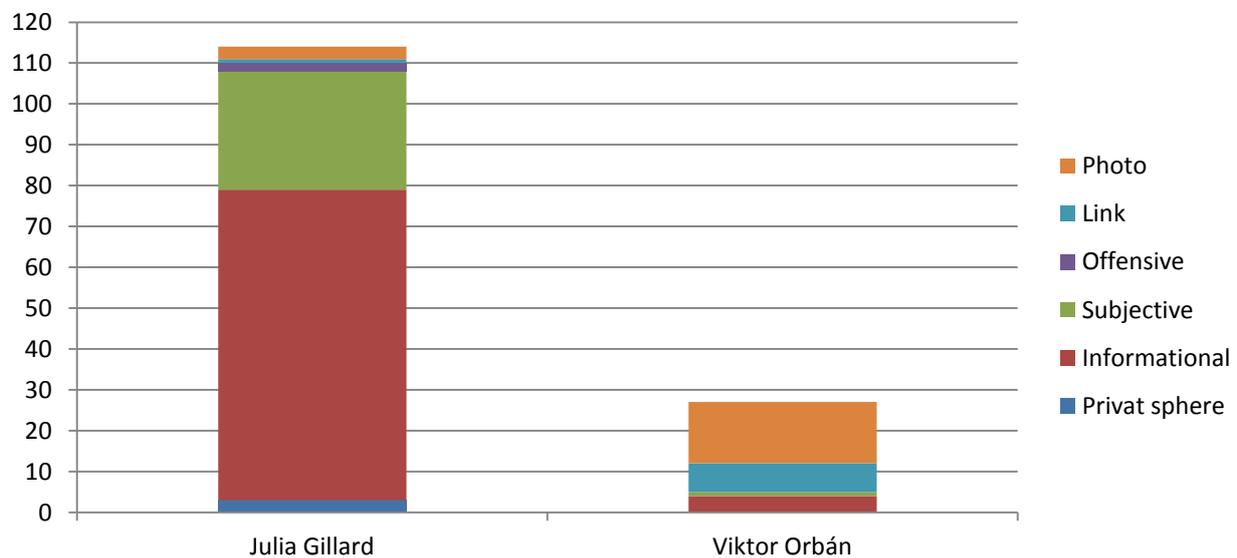
**Figure 7. Distribution of Australian MPs' posts categories**

In the Hungarian case (figure 8) we can see that the proportion of the public life posts are less than in Australia but this 41 percent covers 1242 informational posts. The second largest is the link category; the Hungarian politicians shared 912 links. Many of representatives use subjective and photo posts, we collected 356 subjective and 326 photo posts. The least categories are private sphere with 131 notes and finally, the offensive grade with 55 comments.



**Figure 8. Distribution of Hungarian MPs' posts categories**

Finally, we introduce the Facebook usage of the prime ministers (figure 9). The following figure shows that how Julia Gillard and Viktor Orbán communicated towards their voters on the social network from November 2012 to January 2013.



**Figure 9. Prime ministers Facebook usage**

The Australian and the Hungarian prime minister communicate in very different ways on Facebook. We can read from the figure that the Australian prime minister had much more posts than the Hungarian prime minister during the examined period. Julia Gillard shared posts about her private life but Viktor Orbán never shares similar text notes (the posts on private life are usually shared as photos). The Australian representative usually posted informational messages. 66.6 percent of her all posts are informational. The other category which is often used by Julia Gillard is the subjective type posts. 25.4 percent of her all posts are very personal. She occasionally posts links or photos,

however Viktor Orbán often use links and photos. 25.9 percent of his all posts are links and 55.6 percent of his all messages are photos.

## **5. Possible expectations of Australian and Hungarian MPs regarding the new media**

Many researchers are arguing that social media reconstructs political capital [2] [31]. This could mean that social networking sites could be the perfect tools for political capital. However, the public might see this in another way. Since the emergence of social networking sites the political capital has not reconstructed but has instead crumbled further. As such it is imperative that we find other elements that are the main reasons and goals behind the politicians' use of social networking sites like Facebook.

Here we have developed a set of possibilities. First, as Blumler and Coleman stated: "The Internet has expanded the range of political sources. On the one hand, agenda setting is no longer a politician–journalist duopoly; on the other hand, the commentariat is no longer an exclusive club" [9]. The political elite have to figure out the way how to communicate its agenda to the public. Facebook is one of many platforms for this. Although this communication channel is more interactive than old media channels, it appears that members of the parliaments – at least most of them – are closing down the paths of bidirectional interactivity. In many cases this means quasi-intermediation between the world of information and the public, this can be seen from the heavy use of informational and link or photo sharing posts. Most of these entries do not expect comments or 'likes', and these are status updates that were written with the intention to focus attention. Using this opportunity, politicians are able to set the agenda. This also means that MPs have recognized the possibility of traditional agenda-setting on Facebook and probably on other social networking sites. Party websites are no longer the only tools to reach out to potential voters [16], social networking sites such as Facebook have even more important tools to reach voters and to influence the news feed. We can unequivocally state that Australian and the Hungarian MPs are using Facebook as a tool of persuasion in setting the agenda among the public.

Second, Foot and Schneider [14] distinguished four web campaigning practices: informing, involving, connecting and mobilizing. Although we analyzed the Australian and Hungarian MPs' Facebook posts between two campaigns, we found that the above-mentioned four elements could be discovered on the profiles of analyzed politicians. The informing and involving elements are interrelated. As we stated earlier, the intention to write informational posts could be discovered in MPs posts. In most cases the written informational – not subjective – posts contain information about politicians' media appearance, exhibition or factory openings and other events where the representative will have some kind of role. Sometimes they directly post the electronic format of the invitation, sometimes they just write a short notice, but never forget to draw attention to the fact, that the happening is open to everyone. In case of media appearance, after an interview the MPs often share a direct link with their followers where they can reach the video.

The element of connecting is coded in the nature of social networking sites. Some of the MPs do not forget to greet their followers on Christmas or to thank them for birthday greetings. These posts are typically only for the Facebook followers. The mobilizing element – during two campaigns – is observable when politicians are joining humanitarian, social or political campaigns.

Third, Bimber and Davis in their research article found that "the main message of candidate Web content is reinforcement" [8]. However, it must be stated that the 'reinforcement' cannot substitute

changing of attitudes [29]. This could mean that the views that stated that political parties and politicians should not worry about their secure electorate, and should instead work on reaching the undecided voters, are wrong because loyalty to politician or party “cannot be assumed, but must be constantly reinforced” [15]. It is sure that on Facebook the followers of MPs are mainly those citizens, who sympathize with the MPs and eventually would vote for her or him. This could be seen from the number of likes and the tone of comments. If a follower draws up a critique of the MP, the other followers would protect the politicians as a group. These are the types of occasions when the politician’s profile could work as a tool for reinforcement. Another possibility occurs when the MP states their (subjective) opinion on an issue. Posts written with the intention of making a statement or to attack someone or something (*subjective* and *offensive* categories) are the best opportunity to create an environment when loyal followers have to defend their MP against offensive behavior. Using social networking sites as a tool for reinforcement by the politicians is one of the most visible device in the environment of secure electorate. It could create a real community among her of his followers.

The fourth reason and goal comes from ‘reinforcement’ and it is a building of a community. Tyler suggests that the internet “has given people new ways to approach traditional concerns about how to initiate and develop relationships” [28]. The internet opens an online space for creating relationships. Forums, blogs or social networking sites confirm this idea, because their aim is to connect even unfamiliar users with each other to build different types of networks. These sites work as catalysts in networking and the theme of these interconnections are various from cute kittens to automobiles, from green environment to party politics. Tyler reviewed a number of empirical studies and he stated that “the internet provides people with a technology that allows them to engage in activities that they have already had ways to engage in but provides them with some added efficiencies and opportunities to tailor their interactions to better meet their needs. However, there is nothing fundamentally different about the internet that transforms basic psychological or social life.” [28]. According to our study, one possible aim of Australian and Hungarian MPs on Facebook is to create a community around them, which may create those opinion leaders, who could represent politicians’ views in voters’ micro-communities. This purpose could be seen in most of the posts, when one MP tries to reinforce its followers or when the politician shares pictures from their private life. Hyun [20] comes to similar conclusion regarding the political blogospheres in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany. He thinks that a strong political blogging community could foster a shared identity, that “distinguishing bloggers from other communication actors is predicted to lead to greater interaction among its members, which should manifest itself in dense interconnection among its members in a network” [20]. This could be the situation with the MPs in our study, as well. The only difference is that the nature of Facebook provides the opportunity to highlight the leader – in our case the MP – who can start to build its own community through various persuasive techniques.

## **6. Social media as alternative media in political communication**

In connection with the changing political sphere, Steven Barnett wrote in 1997 that the new media means the rapid development of the new communication technology. Due to its nature it will join the audiovisual entertainment and news, that is the television and the radio, the online information bases and databases (which can be reached through teletext, for example), voice transfer (telephone), and the possibility of the manipulation of data stored on the computers. Looking at the changes from the viewpoint of democracy, the next four outcomes that can be expected include:

- An almost infinite volume of information can be made available;

- Potentially, every individual can communicate with every other individual, not just in a single town, region or state, but ultimately throughout the world;
- Access to information, data and people will be available to citizens at their fingertips and at their convenience;
- Access is potentially universal [5].

More than a decade after Barnett's study we can declare that his prediction has proven to be potentially right if we accept the standpoint that claims that financial, cognitive, physical, linguistic and other factors do not matter at all. Academics and the media talk about virtual communities that are sometimes growing, sometimes are being bought up, sometimes are split, and other times they are merging. The debate has not yet been about to what extent the media is the fourth branch of power, but we have already been talking about a fifth branch, the blogs, the microblogs and other sort of social networking sites [17] [18]. Their function is to control the traditional media, to criticize it and to protect it from political influence. The buzzword is similar every time: 'networking'. But at the same time there is a question about it, namely, whether the blogosphere exists at all, when the number of those blogs that are in interaction with each other – networking – is very small, and the majority of them are characterized by the idea of 'writing for myself'. We could also question the social networking sites potential of political engagement in democracies (for example in authoritarian regimes [21] [25]). In spite of this, blog writers from different political sites and blogs written by politicians, talk about political social-networking instead of the uniting of individuals. Even the spread of urban legends is characterized by the connection between cultures and communities, but networks would be better to explain urban legends and the spread of any other information, as well.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, a part of the media system is slowly dissolving in to citizens' networks, because professional journalists are becoming more 'civilian' and the amateur 'journalists' are becoming more sophisticated. The other part of the media network, which is controlled by the politics, is dissolving in the political network. This means that on one side we see journalist-bloggers, while on the other professional 'agenda-setters'. If the media does not respond to the challenges of the new political communication as I wrote above, it is quite possible that future political communication would have only two relevant actors, the networks of politics and citizens.

James Druckman, Martin Kifer and Michael Parkin [12] think that during the election campaigns the internet is in the focus of modern political communication research. They are approaching this question from the politicians' side, how and why the candidates use the novelty of the web? Druckman et al. argue that self-representation and the interactivity are the two motives, which makes the candidate use the digital space. The politicians are able – with the help of multimedia tools – to grab citizen's attention and be able to make sympathetic his person and policy by the representation. Thus the candidates' websites are similar to an electronic brochure, an important aspect of which will be how frequently information is updated, and how relevant the information is. Interactivity provides bidirectional communication. The site visitors' attention can be influenced by the interactivity and it may be achieved that the voters learn new things about the candidate. The

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<sup>2</sup> We do not discuss it in the study, but with the spread of urban legends the network logic of computer mediated communication and the changes of oral culture are very well traceable. We can see that mediated human communication is getting to be more and more non-linear, decentralized, and the multimedia becomes its foundation. The distinction between orality and literacy becomes less important. [13]. This should mean that those linguistic codes which are known by everyone will disappear, and that the linguistic codes used by a community are highly different from those used by another community. We know, however, that it is not true. Then, we cannot help thinking that the communities do not differ from each other regarding their codes. This statement also does not stand its ground. But the importance of the different code features could well be explained by networks.

risk is that the voters could inquire about issues that are irrelevant for politicians. Interactivity includes personalization as well since the candidate appears during the communication process.

However, the political communication of the information society is not merely a continuation of post-industrial methods, but by integrated use of old techniques it also means development of new methods. The new ways of political communication are also implying traditional door-to-door campaigns, as well as mobilization on web-based digital networks. It is important to note that these are functional networks link to various processes and work. The networks could recreate themselves if they have faded for some reason, thus their structure is changing continuously [10]. The researcher can only track political trends on digital networks, it is impossible to follow the movement of networks as an outsider on a daily basis. Therefore the scholars can only state the new methods of political communication as a current direction of a tendency. As we could see from the research the current direction of a tendency is that MPs are using Facebook as an 'old' media.

Yet, politics and politicians should be interested in setting the agenda of social media, since it is what guarantees its own existence. This could be a goal even if not all its members share this idea. Agenda setting can be best realized if politics recognizes the civilian networks and puts them under obligation by means of different economic, political, sometimes cultural tools. However, we could see from the research that MPs are using social media mostly for informational communication. Informational communication does not differ significantly from the communication method of 'old' media, therefore this would mean that social media is still a tool for the well-known interaction in political communication, where one could discover the signs of media logic and traditional agenda-setting. The possibilities of social media like bidirectional communication, social networking and agenda melding are alternative ways of interaction for the political actors of political communication.

## **7. Conclusion**

Our conclusion here is that: (a) the new ICTs have pluralized social communication therefore effecting not only citizens but the entire world of politics as well (although we have only indirect evidence of this). Research needs to be conducted on politicians Facebook use in other countries as well in order 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 the changing media logic and agenda setting of political communication, but from the aspect of evolution and low interactivity rate together with uni-directional communication, the statement is false. Further research should be made on politicians' use of social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter to find direct evidence; (c) new theoretical dilemmas emerge, that requires new methodological approaches towards the thorough research of the field. This statement would mean the developing of 'new' political communication theory examining the three effects of networking technologies on political communication: globalization, changing media logic and new political communication. These are the emerging theoretical dilemmas that we hope to examine in the near future.

The 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. The research team's expectation is that the rate of interaction would not change significantly, and it will prove the tendencies from the first half of the research. Further comparison should be made to validate this statement.

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