Political Communication in Social Media: Old Logics in a New Outfit?
Vita Dreijere¹

There is a widespread view among scholars that social media have changed and will change political communication significantly. Social media have some advantages if we compare with traditional media in terms of much greater access, interactivity and engagement potential, flexibility, etc. This paper will be focused on how these advantages are used by politicians to communicate with (their) social media public. In the contrary to what is written before about differences between social and traditional media this paper will use the concept of commercial media logic as a framework to analyse the mode of representation of political issues by politicians as well as their self-presentation in social media. The research question is – do political actors try to follow the market-oriented media logic also in social media environment and adapt their messages to the same rules in order to generate the attention or one can speak about emergence of new logic? The sample of semi structured interviews encompass Latvian politicians.

Keywords: Social media, political communication, political actors, commercial media logic

Introduction

Social media has gained their positions among most popular websites and also political actors do not ignore this fact. If potential voters are in any platform also politicians have to be there – many political actors follow this rule. They have used to communicate their messages through traditional media that has had specific communicative context – e.g. gatekeeping, specific audience (i.e. also limited access to the public), quite vertical message transmitting style with limited conditions of interactivity. Social media have not ousted traditional media as a source of information about politics, they are not treated as replacement of traditional media, but it is still quite a new communicative context politicians try to adopt and adapt their messages to. One of the main differences is the mode of communication in broad perspective – if traditional media gate-keepers could allow them to communicate to their audience then political actors who use social media technically have the opportunity to communicate with public. For political actors who have based their offline communication strategy on communication through traditional media (mainly elite actors, especially those who hold more significant positions in the power structures – as they have better opportunities to pass media gates) it means sticking to those offline strategies and relying mainly on media publicity that is gained because

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of political position and Web 1.0 type of campaigns or adapting their communication also to "new" communicative context offered also by social media platforms – immediacy, more horizontal communication and interactivity, high personalization and laypeople as content generators instead of professionals (Klinger & Svensson, 2014: 7).

The current research is quite specific because it involves only one perspective – political actors who use social media for their political purposes (one might call it the dimension of supply). In broader perspective also this dimension has been the subject of discussion. For example there has been conceptual academic discussions about normalization/equalization thesis (e.g. Margolis et al., 1999; Schweitzer, 2011; Larsson, 2013). There are researchers who measure the use of social media by politicians in the context of embracing Web 1.0 or Web 2.0 features. The actual use by politicians is often characterized as a hybrid or Web 1.5 approach. It means that it embraces the combination of top-down Web 1.0 approaches and interactive Web 2.0 advances (Larsson, 2014). Group of scholars who studied websites of all the political parties that took part in the elections of the European Parliament (2009) in France, Germany, Great Britain and Poland concluded that political parties may not have embraced all the features introduced within the era of Web 2.0, but their study provided evidence of an upward tendency - step in that direction (Lilleker et al., 2011: 208).

This is broader context of my research that will test politicians' attitudes and explanations of their social media use. The concept of commercial media logic is used in the conceptual framework of the research although there are certain limitations of the concept. It is involved to examine if politicians follow the "old rules“ also when they use social media or one can speak about new logic that encompass also the features of Web 2.0. That is the first stage of two-stage research where the second stage will encompass the content analysis of politicians social media profiles.

**Theoretical framework**

The concept of mediatization puts media in the centre of social and cultural practices of society. Mediatization is defined as meta-process „that is grounded in the modification of communication as the basic practice of how people construct the social and cultural world“ and they do so „by changing communication practices that use media and refer to media“ (Krotz, 2009; Couldry, 2014). If we turn to more specific discussions about mediatization of politics, it means that media have central positions also in political arena and that has caused changes in politics itself (e.g., Mazzoleni, 2008a): those changes might have involved the spectacularization of political discourse, personalization, the agenda shaping power of media to launch issues for public debate, the fragmentation and simplification of political speeches, so called „sound-bite effect“, winnowing political actors according to their mediagenic presentation skills (Mazzoleni, 2014).

Arguments on media dependence of politics usually are based on concept of „media logic“, that derived from the work of Altheide and Snow (1979). Their original understanding has been criticized and also the recent academic contribution from scholars demonstrates attempts to conceptualize and operationalize it. The essence of the critical arguments is expressed in one simple question: why is this media logic in singular form? And this question explains many of the considerations. Altheide and Snow risked blurring a number of different logics: actual media presentation formats, the wider evaluation of media’s authority, peoples changing
definition of what is real, and what is not; and related desires for that media reality (Couldry, 2014). Is there really one logic that would be relevant for all different forms of communication – interpersonal, interactive and mass communication (Krotz, 2014)? And also if we focus only on mass communication – „media“ is very broad concept and that is why several researchers suggest more narrow perspective, for example, news media logic (Strömbäck & Van Aelst, 2013; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014; Asp, 2014) that is relevant in the political communication. In such conceptualization one might find more common traits of one „umbrella“ logic as rules and standards of news production are much more similar. Altheide (2013) still emphasizes that there are specific applications that might vary but there appears to be basic underlying conceptual logic.

There has been other attempts to conceptualize and operationalize media logic (and also political logic), including previously mentioned news media logic. In one of the latest attempts Landerer (2013) distinguishes normative logic from market logic. In his conceptualization the dimensions of media and political actors’ core interests in the commercial or market logic is maximization of self-interested goals, imperative of newsworthiness, orientation towards audience and demand, populism (Landerer, 2013: 249). Also other scholars have emphasised important dimension of media and political logics – what sells the best? For example Krotz (2014) wrote: in a capitalist system the media try to adapt to the habits and expectations of the people in order to catch them and sell them to the advertising industry, so today’s logic of media system should be the capitalist one. It also corresponds with the model of audience democracy (e.g. de Beus, 2011; Kriesi, 2004). In later article Landerer also offers five dimensions of political actors audience orientation: symbolic issue orientation, bargaining preference, symbolic political interventions, staged media relations (Landerer, 2014).

How does the digitalization affect the concept of mediatization of politics – this is the discussion object for many scholars. New media is one of the arguments that call into question the idea of universal media logic, because new media „not only brought about a variety new presentation formats and content genres, most new media operate on organizational principles, content production and distribution procedures which have little in common with conventional mass media“ (Schulz, 2014). Chadwick (2013) emphasizes that „audience familiarity is still an important aspect of media logic but disruptive media logics may now come from online networks that seek to shape representations of political life according to their own interests and values, using digital communication tools that previous generations could not access“. He is also sceptical about an idea of hegemonic media logic driven by the values of commercialism and entertainment because some of media logics that shape politics may have little or no basis in commercialism. And also the idea of relatively passive mass audience that was encoded in the hierarchical communication mode of „old“ media might not be dominant in new media (Chadwick, 2013).

Also the concept of „network media logic“ has been suggested (cf., Klinger & Svensson, 2014). It lies on an argument that social media platforms follow other rules than traditional media in the dimensions of content production that is characterized by inexpensive information selection and content generation by users according to their individual preferences and attention maximizing, information distribution where users like intermediaries distribute popular content within networks of like-minded others (authors note that like-mindedness is a relative concept, but one should add that in political communication it is even more than relative) and media use that is charactarized by interest-bound and like-minded peer networks (and there might be
the same objections about like-mindedness) with highly selective exposure oriented towards interaction through practices of updating.

**Latvian context: brief overview**

As the research is conducted in Latvia, I should mention few context factors that might be relevant in the interpretation process. Latvia is post-communist country, parliamentary democracy, with media system that has some aspects from all three models suggested by Hallin & Mancini (2004), if we take into account such criteria as media consuming habits, political parallelism, professionalization, market structure and media ownership, regulatory framework (e.g. Šulmane, 2011).

One can attribute the same aspects that scholars use to characterize the parties and party systems in post-communist countries in general also more specifically to Latvia: e.g. party system is fragmented (in Latvian case - extreme multiparty system with a balance among parties); in fact it is in „constant flux“, the linkage between voters and parties is quite weak and that is combined with very low trust in parties and low party membership, Latvia has also high electoral volatility scores, weak ideological positions, ethnic cleavages (Saarts, 2011). During the research period there are five political parties elected in the parliament of Latvia (total seats - 100): „Harmony Centre“ („Saskaņas centrs“ – 30 MPs), „Unity“ („Vienotība“ – 17 MPs), „Reform party“ („Reformu partija“ – 14 MPs), National alliance „All for Latvia!“ - „For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK“ („Visu Latvijai“ – „Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK“ – 13 MPs) and „Union of Greens and Farmers“ („Zaļo un zemnieku savienība“ – 13 MPs). There are 13 members of Latvian parliament who have left their parties and don’t have current party affiliation. Until the beginning of 2014 the coalition was formed by „Unity“, National alliance, „Reform party“ and those MPs without party affiliation but since January 22, 2014 when new government was approved by Latvian parliament, also „Union of Greens and Farmers“ joined the coalition and government.

The data of media research shows that regular internet users are 56% of Latvian population (TNS Latvia, 2014). Social media are among 20 most popular websites – Latvian social network draugiem.lv (25,3% - daily audience), youtube.com (25,1%), facebook.com (15,3%), odnoklassniki.ru (9,4%), twitter.com (4,1%), google+ (3,4%), vkontakte.ru (3,4%).

My research will focus on how the social media are used by Latvian politicians and will be combined with the market logics concept. It has a primary research question:

RQ: Do political actors try to follow the market-oriented media logic also in social media environment and adapt their messages to the same rules in order to generate the attention or one can speak about emergence of new logic?

**Method and research design**

To answer the research question a two-step research will be conducted. The research will consist of a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods: quantitative content analysis of politicians’ social media posts and semi-structured in-depth interviews with political actors.
There is not one universal set of aspects or dimensions of media and political logic that should be included in all the attempts to measure it. There have been several approaches of researchers. For example one of that, approach that offers dimensions of audience oriented logic (Landerer, 2014), is already mentioned in this paper. Other approach how to measure media logic is to include some aspects that are frequently used in recent research: absence of policy issues, personalization, negativity, topicality, absence of ambiguity (Haßler et al., 2014).

I highlighted following aspects that coincide with the theoretical framework of mediatization, market oriented logics and audience orientations in audience democracy and that also follows the pilot research of the politicians’ tweets:

- **Personalization** – e.g. focus on politician, not on the issues; attempts to show politician „as a human“; focus on personal, not professional issues; privatization

- **Conflicts** – e.g. emphasizing disagreements, expressing critical statements about political actors; public conflicts with other politicians in the social media platforms; public conflicts with other social media users (responsiveness in conflicting situations in social media platforms)

- **Simplification** – e.g. reducing complex issues in the mode that would be perceptible for wide audiences; avoiding complex topics that cannot attract wide audiences; sacrifice context to be able to adapt the message to the social media format

- **Emotions** – expressing emotions as a reaction to issues, other social media posts, political actors’ life events, etc.

- **Humor** – using humor in social media posts about serious political issues; pointing out funny observations in professional area as well as personal; humor as an intentional strategy to attract audience

- **Popular topics** – e.g. topics that are already widely discussed in traditional media/ among social media publics; topics that are not yet widely discussed but are „popular“ (for example, impressions of pop culture, sports events)

- **Popular language** – e.g. informal language; slang, vulgarisms, profane language; use of emoticones

- **Interaction with audience members** – active responsiveness

- **Time** – e.g. responding to new media „dictated“ need for immediate reaction; adapting social media posts to time frame that could attract the widest possible audience

That is general set of categories, in the next steps that is adapted for content analysis of politicians’ social media posts, semi-structured in-depth interview questions and categories for analysis of transcripts of the semi-structured in-depth interviews.
The results of semi-structured interviews will be presented in the IPSA World Congress, the content-analysis is still in progress.

The following aspects are taken into account in the sampling criteria: three members of all five political parties elected in the parliament were included in the sample; to ensure that elite politicians are represented the criteria of selection of those three members from each party included the position in the party (leaders of political parties were included if they had social media accounts), political position (ministers of the government were included, in the case if ministers that represented political party did not have social media account leaders of parliamentary committees were preferred), activity and popularity in social media. As new government after demission of Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis was approved during this research and two ministers had demissioned also recently the political positions of politicians during the last year (July, 2013 – July, 2014) were taken into account in the sampling process. A total of 15 politicians were included in the sample, but one politician refused – as a result the number of respondents is 14.

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<tr>
<td>Boriss Cilēvičs</td>
<td>Harmony Centre</td>
<td>MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Einārs Cilinskis</td>
<td>National Alliance</td>
<td>Minister of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (January, 2014 – March, 2014), parliamentary secretary at the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, MP, Member of Board (National Alliance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valdis Dombrovskis</td>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>Prime Minister (until January, 2014), MP (until May, 2014), Member of European Parliament, Member of Board (Unity)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vjačeslavs Dombrovskis</td>
<td>Reform Party</td>
<td>Minister of Education (until January, 2014), Minister of Economics, Head of Reform Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raivis Dzintars</td>
<td>National Alliance</td>
<td>Co-Chairman of National Alliance, MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrejs Elksniņš</td>
<td>Harmony Centre</td>
<td>MP</td>
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Table 1. Overview of the sample of the semi-structured interviews

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party/Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Artis Pabriks</td>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>Minister of Defence (until January, 2014), MP (until May, 2014), Member of European Parliament, Member of Board (Unity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniels Pavļuts</td>
<td>Reform Party</td>
<td>Minister of Economics (until January, 2014), Member of Board (Reform Party)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana Reizniece-Ozola</td>
<td>Union of Greens and Farmers</td>
<td>Chair of Education, Culture and Science Committee (since January, 2014), MP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgars Rinkēviņš</td>
<td>Reform Party</td>
<td>Minister of Foreign Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kārlis Seržants</td>
<td>Union of Greens and Farmers</td>
<td>MP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nils Ušakovs</td>
<td>Harmony Centre</td>
<td>Mayor of Riga, Head of „Harmony Centre“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilze Viņķele</td>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>Minister of Welfare (until January, 2014), MP, Member of Board (Unity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roberts Zīle</td>
<td>National Alliance</td>
<td>Member of board (National Alliance), Member of European Parliament</td>
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As this part of the research is qualitative and it is micro-level it has some limitations in the interpretation process but it gives useful data to build the next part of the research on.

Results

The first signs of media logic could be indicated after analysis of politicians’ motivations to use social media. Almost all respondents mentioned that one of the main functions of social media is not so much direct communication and interaction with voters or general public but providing yet another channel for communication with traditional media. Social media platforms are often used as a news source by journalists and that is a good opportunity to gain useful media coverage with less effort than before and without spending much time in direct interactions with journalists.
„If media follow you it means that you have the opportunity to reach wider audience than it was before. It is extremely important.“

(Roberts Zīle)

„I have experienced situations when journalists ask my opinion because they see [in social media] that I have an opinion on that issue.“

(Dana Reizniece-Ozola)

„If I post something important I formulate it like a press release. I know that 10 minutes later online news media will publish it. It means – I can tell the information I would like to tell in social media and do not send the press release at all.“

(Nils Ušakovs)

Few characteristics of the posts that are written to attract media attention was identified in the interviews: exclusiveness (something that has not been published anywhere else), topicality (correspond to media, political, public agenda), immediacy (need to post the message before it is communicated through other channels, before it is communicated with someone else/ immediate reaction to news event – more likely that media will use this reaction to fill the information deficit immediately after news event has happened and before they have gathered any sufficient information), attractive, provocative message, scandalous announcement, „hook“ (cover the most important information in the social media and leave an intrigue to motivate journalists ask for an interview in order to gain even more media coverage).

The need for fast response that is determined by the increased immediacy as an aspect of new media logic is taken into account by political actors. Social media especially microblogs are appropriate platform for such purpose as the format not only allows but even encourages short and fast responses. But that does not create solely positive effects in the sense of quality of political communication as those responses often doesn’t contain sufficient informational background. It might have caused not only audience effects, but also extensive effects on political decision making process and to generalize – also on the quality of democracy.

„My English colleagues, The Tories, have experienced some problems and they say that now they are very careful because actually you can express your attitude about unverified information.“

(Roberts Zīle)

„That pressure sometimes cultivate responses faster than you know what is happening. And as far as I know it is a problem everywhere. The development of the situation that is documented almost immediately and immediately published requires also completely different speed of reaction by decision makers and communicators. (..) For example on March 1 when Russian Federation Council approved that President of Russia has rights to send troops to Ukraine social networking sites exploded immediately. But we needed at least 2-3 hours to coordinate position with
The President of Latvia who was abroad, with the Speaker of the Parliament and with the Prime Minister because it is not a decision that is taken by just one Minister it is a question of our official position in very important issue. It requires phone conferences, writing of the statement, polishing it, but at the same time you already see [in social media] that public is expressing outrage – why are all officials quiet? (..) This running against time is sometimes dangerous."

(Edgars Rinkēvičs)

„You cannot give immediate qualitative response because you have to be at the government meeting, at consultations. (..) Democracy requires consultations, so we can also presume that social media encourage an authoritarian society because you can take immediate decisions only without consultations."

(Artis Pabriks)

The social media audience is one specific aspect that has to be taken into account when we interpret social media content that is created by political actors, because audience characteristics is also determining factor of social media logic(s) in political communication. The semi-structured interviews contained questions that were intended to clarify the politicians’ perception of the dominating common traits of their social media audiences. It doesn’t coincide with the widespread argument that social media without traditional media gatekeepers might help to bring politicians closer to general publics because the most of politicians described the audiences they are communicating to in social media as the elite stratum of society: not only the fact that those are politically active people with higher level of education and knowledge than generally in the country is relevant. The fact that there are many opinion makers (e.g. high standing officials, media editors and journalists, experts from different fields) in social media was emphasized as relevant. Social media audiences were described as close communities with „elite“ people, not necessary supporters of given politician’s political views but anyway useful contact because of worthy feedback these users can give, their status or knowledge.

It provides also some aspects that politicians take into account when they post their messages: audience is more critical, more sceptical than average traditional media audience it means that social media users could be in some sense gate keepers. One can explain it with an example: if political actor includes populism in his statement in quality traditional media professional journalists as gate keeper should question and critically examine it (at least normatively) but in social media such statements would receive immediate and critical public reaction from users that might be experts in the field, or not experts but still critical.

The possibility to reach so called „elite audience“ may be explanation why most of Latvian politicians who use social media actively use Twitter (platform where this audience is concentrated) and if use other social networking sites as Facebook.com or Draugiem.lv (Latvia’s most popular social networking site) that is more popular among Latvian publics according to data (TNS Latvia, 2014) then just for private communication reasons (opportunity to find foreign friends, to communicate with former school mates, etc.) or for reposting their tweets. Most of the respondents replaced the term „social media“ with Twitter in the interviews. There are just some exceptions also because of ethnic divide of social media audiences –
especially politicians who are oriented to Russian-speaking audience use Facebook more actively to reach this audience that is not active on Twitter.

Taking into consideration the perception of „elite audience“ of social media it is also defined as close community that lives in an imagined bubble and doesn’t represent the reality: it means that politicians share the perception that „real life is happening out there“. If there is also so called „average electorate“ in social media depend on the characteristics of each party’s electorate – politicians who sees the indications that their electorate is more politically active tend to answer that it is also part of their audience in social media, but politicians who characterize their main electorate as seniors and those who live in rural areas tend to answer that it is not in social media. At the same time it explains why social media generally are not perceived as important tool for political campaigns.

Question of social media audience is important not only in a message delivering aspect, but also in interactivity aspect. I included one important aspect of interactivity in the research and that is responsiveness. That demonstrated two possible approaches:

- Low responsiveness – politicians who perceive social media as a platform almost solely just for transmitting their messages (for communication to people, not with people); response to few questions that are conceived as relevant; arguments about time constraints dominated.

„It is a serious decision. I have to realize – if I respond once, then I have to respond again and again or I have to create some kind of criteria why I answer just those people and do not answer others. That is why I chose simple rules of game and do not respond at all.“

(Vjačeslav Dombrovskis)

- High responsiveness – politicians who actively communicate with audience (themselves or their assistants actively answer the questions, take part in discussions), especially high responsiveness – politicians who don’t want to leave questions or sometimes remarks unanswered.

„In my opinion it is correct behaviour. If there is the possibility to ask question then I should answer. Although I am politician I think I have good manners.“

(Boriss Čiliņš)

„If I feel that there is a real person behind the profile [who asked a question] I try to answer always.“

(Kārlis Seržants)

„I think I don’t have rights not to answer because then I should not be in Twitter or be anonymous.“

(Ilze Viņķele)

This could be linked to other dimension – conflicts, that help to attract the attention and may be also one strategy to gain media publicity. It relates also to situations when politicians use social media as yet another platform to publicly discuss with each other. But participation in public conflicts in social media is not very popular strategy among respondents of the research. Conflict situations where
politicians has responded and by their responses participated themselves were described using some personal traits (e.g. sometimes hard to hold on and not to respond) but not with any strategic considerations. Much more common tactics was – not to take part in any conflict situations because such public conversations may gain publicity but its effects might be negative.

„It is clear that might be a show, but... (...) In principle, I without any advices came to a conclusion that I should not take part in too extensive discussions. I know that my foreign colleagues also came to the same conclusion and they got also similar professional advices. I am holding already a month, month and a half. Before that I „raged“ like a crazy. But now I feel that it [not to be involved in conflicts in social media] has the added value.“

(Edgars Rinkēvičs)

One of the main aspects that is often used to describe market logic in political communication is personalization (e.g. Mazzoleni, 2008a, 2008b; Vliegenthart et al., 2011). One might use the conceptualization of personalization where individualization and privatization with their subdimensions general visibility/concentrated visibility and personal characteristics/personal life is combined (Van Aelst et al., 2012) but complete application of this conceptualization to the current research is not possible – the research design provides some limitations. The individualization dimension could be measured in other kind of sample with broader range of social media content producers included because there were just politicians (and most of them plays leading roles in their parties) included in the sample: it means that individualization aspect is encoded in this research design and at some point – also in the social media format. But the dimension of privatization is worth analyzing.

Most of the research of the privatization dimension is devoted to media to measure if they prefer to focus on politicians private traits but social media is the platform that allows us to examine politicians’ self presentation without traditional media intervention. That demonstrates how much politicians are tended to cover their personal life in public platforms themselves. Both types of politicians were identified – those who have reduced their personal content to minimum (arguments: „that is not relevant“, „I prefer to talk about professional issues“) and those who combine political and professional content with personal. The second type politicians mostly emphasize the need to humanize politicians, to demonstrate the audience that politicians are „real persons“, not just „robots“. In some interviews also the emphasis „my private account“ appeared.

„Every politician sometimes has to prove that he is a normal human being. Anyway a picture with a beaver will be for 100% much more popular and commented, and discussed than any „superclever“ text about (...) Latvian politics.“

(Nils Ušakovs)

„If the voter or society sees politician only from professional side it is just one-side view. (...) If you don’t want to appear in tabloid press, social media is quite good way how to demonstrate society that you are an interesting personality. That you are a person who has something more than your job.“

(Dana Reizniece-Ozola)
“It is important that a voter has the possibility to see a personality, not only the “machine” that is voting in the parliament. Politician can show only some guidelines in their short party programs but challenges politicians have to face during this four year period in parliament are unpredictable. And that is why the voter has to feel intuitively: „Who I want to vote for.“ And there might be this irrational part – to be able to feel if this person likes me or not. If I can trust him. How does he act in relationship with his children, with his family, how honest he are... And in that sense I think they have to see the politician’s private life at some point, if it is not just PR stunt.“

(Raivis Dzintars)

The topics of the personalized content varies but interesting observations of different life events, reflections of interesting experiences at home and at work, personal impressions of cultural and sports events and information about personal hobbies dominated. Although politician’s private life is an important resource for the construction of political identity (Corner, 2000) and also families take part in this process, often exactly the family is the borderline of privatization of the social media content: it means covering different observations from public places but not to tell any private information and it regards especially to the families that are not manifested in social media.

Other principle of personal content production is – not to write something that is too trivial (e.g. „I ate brokoli for dinner“) but instead of such content politician has to cover something that might be if not relevant than at least interesting and can gain attention. Useful strategy in such situations is humor that attracts the followers, helps to humanize a politician and serves as useful instrument to personalize also the political content. Humor is described as an element of social media logics, especially in the case of Twitter – joking is one of the best strategies in this format of short microblogs.

„In fact all this system is based on humor. This belongs to the style and good practice of this social networking site [Twitter]. If someone acts too seriously, I am not sure if he is succeeding.“

(Einārs Cilinskis)

Another aspect that is identified by some of the respondents – the production of personal content in social media means that politician himself/herself has to be the content creator because the professionalization of communicators is not sufficient enough to write the posts like an other person. They may cover official issues, e.g. topics that are related to the political position but they cannot cover very personal issues.

The same relates to emotions. Emotions can help to bring the politician closer to the publics (see also Richards, 2004) and politicians agree on the assumption that showing appropriate emotions in social media is also one strategy that could help to humanize the politician and reduce the distance between politicians and the audience. Emotional messages in social media can attract traditional media attention as well. But emotional responses also create some risks: a) if politician is not the content creator, the audience might perceive such posts as artificial; b) if political actors make
a step across the border between appropriate/ inappropriate emotions, this may cause negative effects.

Yet another trait of media logic that is mentioned in academic literature is simplification. This aspect was included in the semi-structured interview questions. All the politicians point out that the format of social media presumes that the post has to be simple, but there were opposite attitudes to the question if that means that the content of the message is simplified itself or it is just said in shorter manner. This specific environment has encouraged political actors to use also less formal language to be like a „normal human being“ or „so people can understand“. It depends on the preferred image of politician. Those who want to construct „intellectual image“ write in more advanced manner.

„I can afford to write in more academic manner in Facebook than I would write in my opinion article in news portal. Anyway – if you don’t like, you don’t read. But it depends on the topic.“

(Boriss Cīliņičs)

But if the preferred image is „own guy“ then the language and the style of the expression in general is much more popular and include also simplification. Social media formats also encourage this popular communication manner.

„Who is interested in official politician’s language in Twitter? All the parties have their official accounts. That is the place they can use this official political language.“

(Kārlis Seržants)

„I guess when I speak about the preamble of the constitution at the parliament that is historical event I speak in more formal manner if I compare with my chit-chats with Elksnīņš [politician – V.D.J]. It is like a subdimension where on the one hand politician remembers that he is a politician, he is being watched and he has to take into account all the ethical norms, but on the other hand – he has to merge with the people. It is like going to the beach – politician will wear swimming trunks there, not the suit.“

(Raivis Dzintars)

„Social media is the same home yard only different technological solution. (.) If you can communicate with people in home yards, you can do it also in social networking sites.“

(Nils Ušakovs)

„Don’t perceive it [social media] as something too relevant or serious. Twitter is twitter. It is not policy planning document. It is just a place for tweeting. And people are tweeting there, including me.“

(Valdis Dombrovskis)

Previously mentioned quotes and also Appendix 1 where the extract of politicians’ reflections about social media posts that attracts the biggest attention are
emphasized indicates that social media are perceived as a room of popular and in some cases even chit-chat style of communication and socialization. It is not perceived as a platform for serious discussions about political issues, at the best it could be a platform that gives the first clues for discussions. On the other hand the possibility to post links that guide to the information that supports the arguments or provide expanded arguments may contribute in informed discussions also on policy issues.

Discussion

To answer the question that is posed in the title of this paper – no, this stage of the research shows indications that one cannot speak about old logic(s) because there are new aspects that complement the communication in social media. Especially those aspects that provide the opportunity for socialization and interaction matters because that in the combination with specific social media formats, audience characteristics and proximity, even if it is imagined, creates new communicative context and change communication practices. That cannot maintain the same logics that are used to explain the interaction between traditional media and political actors.

At the same time situation is a little bit different if we take into consideration the latest efforts to conceptualize these logics and concept of „market logic“ (Landerer, 2013). All the elements of so called „market logic“ that I included in the research were identified also in politicians’ perceptions of their communication in social media. This supports the thesis of the popularization of political communication that occurs in traditional media and as the results of semi-structured interviews showed – even more in social media. And another important aspect - if one of the primary goals for communication in social media is to use it as another channel for communication with traditional media journalists in order to get coverage in traditional media it is a decisive factor in terms of affecting the logic. As I mentioned before quantitative content analysis as a next step of the research should provide the data that will support it.

The research until this step indicates that those social media logics should be linked with image-making strategies of politicians because it strongly affects also the communication in social media. It is a context that should not be ignored especially because social media by definition means communication without filters from aside that chose which aspects to emphasize as in case of traditional media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>„Advanced“/ official approach</th>
<th>„Intellectual“</th>
<th>„Oracle“</th>
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<tr>
<td>Popular approach</td>
<td>„Own guy“</td>
<td>„Celebrity“</td>
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Table 2. Politicians’ performance models in social media

The results of interviews allow to identify four performance models of politicians in social media if I correlate two factors – responsiveness and self-presentation style. On one axis there is responsiveness – average/ high responsiveness
(both included in one category because it is an indicator that politician is actually responsive) and low responsiveness (respond in very few cases or doesn’t respond at all). The other axis includes two approaches to politicians’ self-presentation in social media. The first approach I called „advanced“/ official approach. This category encompasses politicians who do not stick to the need to communicate in popular manner and do not refuse to choose topics that may be relevant in the field of his/her competence but at the same time do not attract majority and perhaps may be comprehensible to few experts in the field; they use language that is not adapted to the „popular“ style – it may be less formal, but without the use of jargon, vulgarisms, profane language etc.; there is low level of personalization in privatization aspect; it includes strategies to attract advanced (elite) audience – e.g. competence + „smart“ humor. Politicians who use popular style of communication in social media and in that way show that they do not differ from people are included in the second category. Those are politicians who include, for example, much personal information (impressions from different life events, photos, information about family), use popular language, emoticons, simplified messages, write about popular topics – i.e. politicians who demonstrate (and use it as a strategical tool or not) that they do not differ from the folks.

As a result of correlation of these dimensions four performance models in social media can be extracted. The first one – „Intellectual“ – means that politicians use social media to demonstrate their competence and also improve it by harvesting useful information from informed people and they are especially interested in elite opinion. These politicians are also responsive – they respond and sometimes also discuss about different issues with social media users but those are usually competent discussions (or have such claims) and these politicians prefer to discuss with elite or people who have gained certain competence on the issue. On the contrary – „oracle“ is a politician who also uses social media to demonstrate his competence or write for more advanced public and who does not try to follow popularization trends but at the same time he is not responsive. He uses social media just for conveying his messages and perhaps for gathering the information from the content produced by other social media users (in that case – from so called elite opinion), but he prefers the vertical communication mode and uses social media just for communication to people.

So called „own guy“ performance model relates to politicians who have adapted popularization trends to their communication. They cover popular topics, discover much personal information, write about their impressions and show the impressions and different life events also in photos, they explain political issues in the perspective of humor, they use popular and definitely unformal language – this list could continue because there are many ways how to personalize and popularize the communication in social media. And at the same time politicians who conform to „own guy“ performance model are also responsive: they are friendly, they (or their assistants) answer questions and communicate with other social media users, often in so called „chit-chat“ style.

But the „celebrity“ performance model relates to politicians who use the same popular mode of communication in social media. They are popular but at the same time they keep the distance between them and others in this case in terms of responsiveness.

These performance models are matter for further research but they were mentioned here because they refer also to the topic of this paper. It does not mean that there are exactly four logics in which political actors are operating – it should not be
interpreted in this way. But at the same time those performance models are factors that shape the logic(s).

New media and particularly social media in the context of mediatization is still an undertheoretized issue, although during last 2-3 years there have been significant efforts in this direction. This paper is not a contribution for the theoretical framework as this study is in large part empirical and encompass just one country. But at the same time findings should be the contribution for further analysis of the phenomenon as it identified some interesting aspects.

References

Appendix 1. Which politicians’ social media posts attracts the biggest attention? Extract of politician’s quotes on that issue.

„What attracts larger audience attention – first, humor, secondly, if the content is live and it is not some propaganda.“

(Einārs Cilinskis)

„I guess emphasis, pepper in an amount that is reasonable for a politician but with irony. I guess people prefer different kind of paradoxical comparisons, formulated as briefly as possible. And, of course, competent source of information. Empty posts will not attract large audience. It doesn’t give any additional value, you forget about that very soon. If it is not based on the content and it is just colorful sentence then you have to be great in your expression.“

(Roberts Zīle)

„I guess it is the thing that film classics have already emphasized: if you want to make successful movie, you need two things – animals and kids. Secondly of course: language - how interesting it is. I think we should not exclude humor.“

(Kārlis Seržants)

„People realize very fast where is the PR machine and where politician writes himself. Even with grammar mistakes. They even forgive if they see that it is you and not just your advisers who formulate plain phrases. And last – you have to think about different content. That is why I sometimes write some nonsense, or quote of the day or if I have especially smart idea myself. Or humor. Of course the most funny posts are those where you say something ironical about yourself.“

(Edgars Rinkēvičs)

„It has to be sharp. One can compare it with herd of sheep – if all will go the same direction, none will notice you. You have to choose different direction. That’s why I’m not very good in growing the number of followers in Twitter because I think – you can attract the attention with provocation but it is important for me not to speak against my beliefs.“

(Dana Reizniece-Ozola)

„I think that people more and more prefer visual messages. And also it should not be „How are you? – Good“ style of message. It should not be something expected, classic, that everybody is saying. If you can formulate good comparison or anecdote, it could attract attention.“

(Raivis Dzintars)

„I remember one situation when I was wearing Mickey Mouse hat and took a photo with that at our faction meeting. This photo was funny. I published it and then some colleagues from other party came to me and said: „Listen, this photo with Mickey Mouse caused more resonanse and fun than did my post about global problem that we discussed in the parliament“. It is also an evalutation.“

(Andrejs Elksniņš)

„It is clear that you can get more resonanse with colorful, contradictory statements. But then there is the question if it helps the politician in long term. You can publish
such statements but then there is a risk that after the 10th such statement none will pay any attention because will just think – oh, he just manifests all the time.”

(Valdis Dombrovskis)