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Social Media: the New Forms of Political Expression

Book Review: Wojciech Opióła & Malwina Popiołek, *Media społecznościowe. Nowe formy ekspresji politycznej*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek 2014, (pp. 196). ISBN 978-83-8019-097-9.

The authors of the reviewed publication question whether technology and the nature of social media can now be classified as mass media, or whether it still exclusively remains as a social media, connecting fans of a book or computer game for example. The book was published in 2014, so part of the news published in it is already obsolete and has become outdated in such a rapidly growing field that is media studies.

Another problem raised by the authors is the politics of social media. On the one hand, the medium plays a key role in the democratisation of society on a global scale, as politicians treat social media as a source of manipulation for what appears in other media, commenting on reality in a way that fits them. On the other hand, the media refers to politicians' statements by quoting them directly from their news feeds. Unfortunately, the authors do not mention the latter. Also, social media provides an opportunity for political opposition, as well as unelected groups and movements, or even to terrorist organisations. The authors try to answer the question regarding how politicians find themselves in the world of social media, whether they use it actively, or maybe they only have accounts but do not use them?

The first chapter is devoted to the place of social media in mass media, practice and theory. The authors take into account the specificities of this medium, set out to define the concepts 'social media' and 'user generated content', as well as try to determine the definition of 'social media'. They give specific examples of such media and show that it is not the only the well-known Facebook.

The second chapter deals with the political involvement of social media users. The author asks how many people on the Internet reveal their political affiliation, and whether it is in line with their actual views, or whether they just pretend to fit in with the norm. The

researcher critically examines the cyber-enthusiasts' and cyber-sceptics' approach to social media. She shows the evolution of the concept of "web tribes".

The third chapter talks about the political and legal aspects of making public information available through social media. The authors ask whether it is appropriate to obtain information from the public administration via the Internet in Poland. Can the Internet replace traditional communication with citizens? Does this not lead to social exclusion? Do politicians not disclose confidential information instead of announcing it in a specially prepared way?

Chapter Four was devoted to the presence of local politicians from the Opole Voivodship in social media. It was contrasted with the communication carried out by Polish Members of the European Parliament. What rights do citizens and politicians have on such portals? What are the advantages, and what threats exist on the Internet? The authors note that local politicians use internet tools much less frequently than national politicians. They analysed the website, personal Facebook accounts, fan pages, Twitter accounts, NK.pl, Google+ and YouTube.

The fifth chapter demonstrates the importance of social media in the face of the political crisis. The authors have focused on the events of the Arab Spring, and countries including, Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Libya, to see their role in the process of overthrowing regimes by society. An example of a crisis in social media is the image crisis in social media by Jacek Kurski, who published photos from Maidan. The authors distinguish the stages of the crisis and report the consequences of the crisis.

The sixth chapter discusses the state of research into the politics of social media and the Internet. The author sets out his research methodology, basic categories and paradigms, but above all shows the vastness of publications on the subject.

The book was intended to be multi-generational, therefore, alongside young researchers – doctoral students from various fields, the book also includes the work of more experienced researchers, where they discuss issues of interest. The advantage of this publication is that it tackles many political issues and illustrates them through the inclusion of photographs and graphs, which in turn familiarizes the reader with the subject matter and presents a good starting point for further research, by providing a detailed bibliography.

References:

Opioła, W., & Popiołek, M. (2014). *Media społecznościowe. Nowe formy ekspresji politycznej*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

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