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TOP 10 POLISH POLITICIANS ON TWITTER – A REVOLUTION IN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION? – RECONNAISSANCE RESEARCH

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Introduction – political impact of Twitter

In December 2013, a few days before Christmas Eve, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Poland published an interview with Radosław Sikorski, Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs¹, summing up the year 2013. In this interview the minister – inter alia – expressed his thoughts about activity of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in social media (mainly Twitter). He has said that nowadays Twitter seems to be one of the most effective tools in modern diplomacy. Sikorski boasted that his ministry is perceived as being the third most active institutions in social media in the whole world, after the External Action Service of the European Union, but before the British or French Ministries of Foreign Affairs. He stressed that the activity of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Twitter has been an effect of a cultural and informational breakthrough in Polish diplomacy. He directly connected being on Twitter with running a diplomacy service. He said – *Thanks to Twitter we are able to spread our statements quicker and wider, to many people and institutions at once.*

¹http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/aktualnosci/wiadomosci/minister_spraw_zagranicznych_podsumo_wuje_rok_2013_i_mowi_o_planach_na_przyszlosc, 8.01.2013 and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RtMWgWTWha4#t=15>, 8.01.2013.

Furthermore, we can – through the social media – create the global platform of informational confrontation in diplomacy.

Next – a day before the New Year's Eve of 2014 – Donald Tusk, Prime Minister of Poland, decided to sum up the passing year with users of Twitter during an hour – between 3 and 4 pm on his Twitter account. He answered numerous questions from other politicians, citizens and journalists. Without announcing a press conference in a specific place. Just tweeting in a virtual sphere.

In another case, at the beginning of 2014, James Cameron the Prime Minister of Great Britain, said in a television interview that the British State should not pay social welfare to Polish workers for their children who are living in Poland. This controversial idea was met with a response by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. However, this response was not announced during a press conference, on the official website of Ministry, or even in a nationwide newspaper or evening news. This response – or statement – was published on Twitter. Or better – simply – was “tweeted” – *If Britain gets our taxpayers, shouldn't it also pay their benefits? Why should Polish taxpayers subsidize British taxpayers' children?* No doubt Twitter seems to be one of the most transformative web phenomena not only for Polish politicians.

And the final example. The last European Union Summit was a success achieved – as always in pain – in compromise. The Polish government announced a triumph – 105.8 billion € will come to Poland between 2014 and 2020. However, it was not politicians who were stars of the summit, but rather it was Twitter – their tool to communicate with Europeans. On the night of February 8, right after reaching the agreement, Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, wrote (tweeted) on his Twitter account: *Deal done! #euco has agreed on #MFF for the rest of the decade. Worth waiting for.* After that Polish web surfers and Paweł Graś's (the Polish

government spokesman) account followers could read on Twitter: *SMS already received from prime minister: Deal done!!!!* Is the view of sleepy journalists propping up their heads while waiting for news about the European Council's results and organisation of a press conference a thing of the past? Is the classical communication model – politician -> journalist -> citizen going away? Still growing in popularity among politicians, economists, people of culture, scientists and even citizens – Twitter as a microblogging platform allow web users to bring up these questions. Many researchers have tried to provide an answer to these questions dealing with the idea of "new media" and the essence of social media². However, the focus in this article will be on Twitter and its revolutionary impact on political communication³.

The aim of this text is to – on the one side – present changes that are undergoing right now in the social communication, due to activity of polish politicians on Twitter. On the other side, according to empirical results which are presented in the second part of this paper, I propose certain indicators of research for the analysis of political communication in social media and stress

² See first of all: L. Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, Massachusetts 2002; M. Lister, J. Dovey, S. Giddings, I. Grant, K. Kelly, *New Media: A Critical Introduction*, London 2003; L. Lievrouw, S. Livingstone, *Handbook of New Media*, London 2006 (compare also with: L. Lievrouw, *Alternative and Activist New Media. Digital media and society series*, Cambridge 2011); P. Levinson, *New New Media*, London 2009; E. Siapera, *Understanding New Media*, London 2012. And of course all issues of *New Media and Society*.

³ In last years appeared many studies in various disciplines dedicated to Twitter – see e. g.: W. J. Grant, B. Moon, *Digital Dialogue? Australian Politicians' use of the Social Network Tool Twitter*, "Australian Journal of Political Science", Vol. 45, No. 4, December 2010, pp. 579-604; N. S. Terblanche, *You cannot run or hide from social media—ask a politician*, "Journal of Public Affairs", 2011, Vol. 11., No. 3, pp. 156-167; N. Jackson, D. Lilleker, *Microblogging, Constituency Service and Impression Management: UK MPs and the Use of Twitter*, "The Journal of Legislative Studies", Vol. 17, No. 1, March 2011, pp. 86–105; E-J. Lee, S. Y. Shin, *Are They Talking to Me? Cognitive and Affective Effects of Interactivity in Politicians' Twitter Communication*, "Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking", 2012, Vol. 15, No. 10, pp. 515-520; D.S. Lassen, A. R. Brown, *Twitter: the electoral connection?*, "Social Science Computer Review" 2011; Vol. 29, pp. 419–436; J. Golbeck, J. Grimes, A. Rogers, *Twitter use by the US Congress*, "Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology", 2010, Vol. 61, No. 8, pp. 1612–1621; A. Bruns, J. Burgess, *#ausvotes—How Twitter covered the 2010 Australian federal Election*, "Communication, Politics & Culture", 2011, Vol. 442, pp. 37-56.

the need for research in virtual space, because it profoundly affects the thinking and perception of contemporary politicians about their role in the public sphere.

Twitter's magic

What is the source of popularity of Twitter?⁴ It seems that it is an extension of modern human character – it's leading to simplification. Contemporary human being lives in a rush – there is always a lack of time, we always says to ourselves and others "soon", "later", and obviously "not now". Moreover, we are permanently worn-out. In addition, we have a constant feeling that something is still missing, we would like to know more and faster. Not only that, he would also like to understand more, to be able to deduce, draw conclusions – but on the other hand, when do we find the time? Furthermore, we often promise to ourselves – especially in the New Year – to make up for something and take care of something in order to change. This constant pursuit has been recognized by the creators of Twitter, which – as any other social media – reflects the great spirit of the modern life⁵.

Twitter has some advantages. Firstly, the speed of it's communication. Before portals and websites (not to mention the so-called old media – newspapers, radio, television) inform us about a catastrophe, an event, a decision of authorities, or an accident of a popular actor, the community of Twitter probably already knows it. Why? Firstly, Twitter's ease of use (austerity combined with grace, neat appearance of the cockpit). Secondly, its friendliness (usability – intuitive interface – every Internet user after a while

⁴ See: A. Brock, *From the Balchand Side: Twitter as a Cultural Conversation*, "Journal of Broadcasting&Electronic Media, 2012, Vol. 54, No. 4, pp. 529-549.

⁵ Cf P. Levinson, *The long story about the short medium: Twitter as a communication medium in historical, present, and future context*, "Journal of Communication Research", 2011, Vol. 48, pp. 7–28.

knows “what” and “how” and “who”). What must to be stress out is the lack of unnecessary and confusing graphics which prolong signing in and loading process (like Facebook, for example). All these factors make Twitter easier to continuously use than any other “delayed medium”. It is worth mentioning that anyone can tweet. Twitter is neither institutional nor alternative. It is for all who are here and now. Twitter is the medium of the present time – not about the past, or even what will be – just what is happening at the moment. It is a stethoscope of reality – not only virtual, but most of all real. Twitter allows us to have our finger on the pulse of contemporary vibrant, global world. It happens through its accessibility, visibility, scale and extent of involvement of people worldwide.

Secondly, the directness of communication. No intermediaries and full interactivity - me and my recipient. Besides us there are hundreds, thousands, even millions – like on Barack Obama's account – of “observers” and “followers” – people, who are watching and tracking us, who for some reasons want to receive the same information that we receive. They want to be up to date. Twitter has encoded the easiness of building communities – groups of friends who share primarily information, opinion and views. It is a completely different logic of action than in the case of Facebook which has become the medium of philosophy of life, self-presentation, self-creation. On Facebook, it is crucial who you are – what kind of person you are – what you like, what you look like, what kind of people you know. On Twitter, on the contrary, you are worth as much as your latest tweets – how much your account is rich in interesting content – interesting news, opinions, attitudes, perceived phenomena. That is what counts. It builds the opinion-forming factor of Twitter users. The leader is one who has the biggest number of “followers” – ones who watch his account. Initially, it is enough to have a famous name, messages – tweets – are needed later, they determine popularity and add

something to this phenomenal discourse of aggregated information and opinions about what is happening here and now.

Thirdly, brevity. Twitter is not a place for disputes. Here we do not place screeds, expressions deepening our understanding of reality through a larger number of characters. It is widely known that you can always say something in a shorter way and mostly brevity will improve what anyone says. Everything important can be said briefly. In other words, without mincing words. We are encouraged by the developers of Twitter to do that. To say even more, we are forced to. That is because of a limited number of characters in a single tweet: 140 characters is not a lot. If someone wants to add a hyperlink to some important news, even in the case of using a tool to cut an url address (e.g. tinyURL), there are not many characters left. This brevity of communication is an advantage of Twitter, but can also be a drawback. Speaking of brevity, there is a risk that some kind of undesirable simplifications and even mental shortcuts, which may be misleading, will occur and deteriorate the purpose and effectiveness of our communication. This is a real risk of communication via Twitter, often experienced by Polish politicians. It will not be an exaggeration to say that a tweet is a new kind of media statement. Again, speaking within 140 characters is not so easy. Twitter users are expected to maximise their concentration on thinking in a highly synthetic way. These days writing on paper is not an obstacle anymore (everything can be written down) because everything can be printed out and published, but even on a blog the ability of presenting thoughts briefly is worth its weight in gold. A tweet simply responds to the needs of a modern person, it fits the conditions in which it is located now. On the one hand, it is quick, easy, more specific, on the other hand – a lot of messages appear at once, which can easily be explored. That is what Twitter offers – it is open also to hypertextuality, which allows us to find important data and sources for tweets

in an easy way. Put it brief: we explore the understanding of information/a view when 140 characters are not enough. We could say that tweets are an expression of topics and problem which people are asked to think about while sitting in the waiting room for the doctor, during classes at the university, or on the way home or to work. It can be an occasion for reflection, to build a database of issues that you should consider, which should be discussed with relatives. This is an advantage of Twitter over all social media.

Fourthly, Twitter shortens the distance between the participants of communication-interaction. Accounts of the highest state authorities on Twitter are designed to improve communication between government and citizens (without journalists mediation⁶, which is often difficult and nosy). They enable the autonomous, fully controlled narrative about the nature of their responsibilities, tasks performed and fulfilled promises. Finally they shorten the distance, improve the image, let you come closer and build a relation with any Internet user. Each Twitter user following official accounts has a chance, an opportunity to ask about something, criticise or share thoughts directly with people inaccessible to him in a real world. It democratizes a discourse between the government and society⁷. This is a great added value. Another question is whether the account holder will write back and make a statement to his followers' entries. It is no secret that it is very difficult to have a discussion on Twitter – just because it was not designed to meet this expectation. It is rather a place to exchange observations or positions, but not for a lively discussion, which can be seen for example on Facebook profiles.

⁶ A. N. Ahmad, *Is Twitter a useful tool for journalists?* "Journal of Media Practice", 2010, Vol. 11, pp. 145–155 and P. Farhi, *The Twitter explosion*, "American Journalism Review", 2009, Vo. 31, No. 3, pp. 26–31.

⁷ See: A. O. Larsson, *Tweeting the Viewer—Use of Twitter in a Talk Show Context*, "Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media", 2013, Vol. 57, No. 2, 2013, pp. 135–152.

Fifthly, there is universality. Anywhere, at any time of day or night – always someone tweets, someone keeps track of followers, reads and forwards. This is never a sleeping agora. Its participants are never short of topics and never get bored, because – as mentioned earlier – Twitter allows 21st century people to have the impression of keeping finger on the pulse of the vibrant, global world that is happening here and now – on Twitter⁸.

Polish TOP 10 politicians on Twitter in 2013 - reconnaissance research

In line with the topic of this paper, I have conducted research on political Twitter. Namely, I decided to analyse the most popular and most influential (definition of this words – categories – see further) profiles of the Polish politicians on Twitter – TOP 10 of 2013. The day of aggregating data was Christmas Eve – 24.12.2013 r.⁹ I chose ten profiles of Polish politicians that have the biggest number of followers. I argue that those who have the most followers were the most influential in social media in 2013 and their activity penetrated the most space of political discourse in the web. The table below (table no. 1) lists the TOP 10 politicians along with a brief information about them.

⁸ However, it is worth remembering that some limits are set within social media, especially Twitter – N. Miragliotta, *Politicians, Twitter and the Limits of the Virtual Political Public Sphere*, "Social Alternatives", 2012, Vol. 31, No. 2, pp. 5-10.

⁹ I decided to choose this date because – on the one side – I wanted to aggregate the most actual data for the research which I would be able to analyse in a proper deadlines for an issue of "e-Politikon". On the other side, I wanted to eliminate the risk of aggregating the data which will be in a very close connection with europarlament campaign. I wanted to omit the so-called "campaign's bias" or "campaign's effects". Furthermore, I assumed that Christmas Eve will be a good date for some summarizing tweets which will effectively cut off the topics related to the 2013 from the problems and ideas relating already to the new year 2014.

Tab. 1. TOP10 Polish Politicians on Twitter.

Name and surname	Account name	Number of followers (from start to 24.12.2013)	Brief characteristic
Palikot Janusz	<i>@Palikot_Janusz</i>	188 418	Leader of the party – "Your Move"
Radosław Sikorski	<i>@sikorskiradek</i>	164 606	Minister of Foreign Affairs
Donald Tusk	<i>@premiertusk</i>	95 910	Prime Minister
Jerzy Buzek	<i>@JerzyBuzek</i>	64 188	MEP, Former PM of Poland and President of the EP
Paweł Graś	<i>@PawełGraś</i>	48 920	Secretary of State in the Prime Minister's Office, Former Spokesman of the Polish Government
Ryszard Kalisz	<i>@RyszardKalisz</i>	45 368	Member of the Polish Parliament, Lawyer, Former Minister of Interior and Administration
Adam Hofman	<i>@AdamHofman</i>	42 901	Member of the Polish Parliament
Sławomir Nowak	<i>@SlawomirNowak</i>	41 940	Member of the Polish Parliament, Former Minister of Transport
Wojciech Olejniczak	<i>@wolejniczak1</i>	32 025	MEP, Former Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development
Bartosz Arlukowicz	<i>@Arlukowicz</i>	30 023	Member of the Polish Parliament, Minister of Health

Source: own research.

The main purposes of this research was to:

Firstly – present a panoramic view of TOP Polish politicians activity on Twitter;

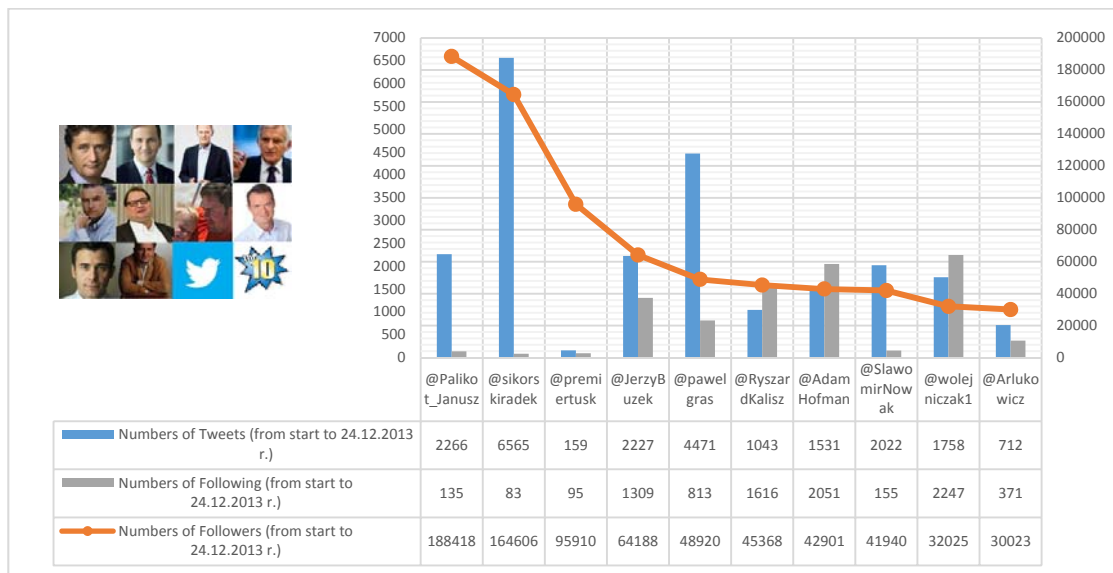
Secondly – point out the most striking similarities and differences between politicians' profiles on Twitter;

Thirdly – propose – based on empirical data – some indicators (indexes) of analysing politicians' activity on Twitter, which could be used in political communication research. At this point I wanted to outline research

possibilities for political communication which Twitter offers. Namely, what type of question can we put on politician's Twitter and how does provided answers which affect our thinking about political communication – in the 21st century?

Due to the lack of space in this paper, I have focused on presenting indicators, their meaning and their potential use in further research. To a lesser extent I have referred to content of every profile, categories and subjects of tweets or causes of having more or fewer followers, retweets, hashtags or replies. These aspects will be the key issue in my next article dedicated to social media – especially Twitter which is the main target in my research project. All empirical data were aggregated using Twittonomy.com and my own software (web crawling) (I automatically analysed no more than 3200 tweets – characteristics and content – per profile – due to Twitter's limitation of refreshing data.) Twitter returns a maximum of up to 3200 user's most recent tweets (in my research this limitation refers only to Janusz Palikot's, Radosław Sikorski's, Donald Tusk's and Jerzy Buzek's profiles (>3200) – see figure no. 1). The collected data cover the period from the very beginning of 2013 till Christmas Eve 2013).

Fig. 1. Panoramic view of Polish Politicians on Twitter - TOP 10 (>24.01.2013 r.).



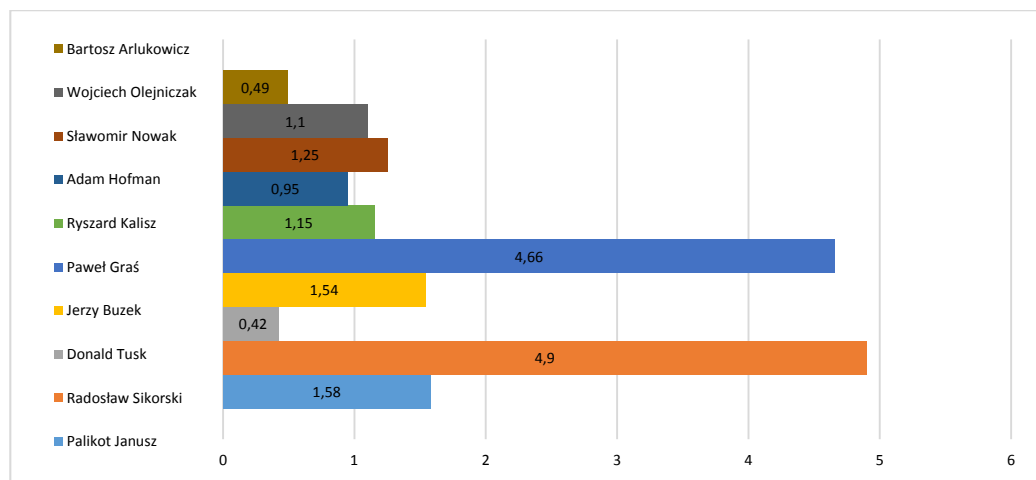
Source: own research.

No doubt the most active Polish politician on Twitter, with almost 7000 tweets, is Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs. Second, with nearly 4500 tweets, comes Paweł Graś, former spokesman of the Polish government. It is worth noting that the smallest number of tweets in the Polish TOP 10 politicians on Twitter is Prime Minister Donald Tusk who tweeted only 158 times, although he joined Twitter 17th September 2011. It could mean that Twitter still is not his main channel to communicate with the public. However, according to Donald Tusk’s activity on Twitter in December 2013, we could say that this is changing. For instance, in December Polish Prime Minister decided to sum up the year 2013 on Twitter on 30th December 2013 from 3 pm to 4 pm. It was the first time that Donald Tusk had so openly acted on Twitter.

What must be stressed is the fact that among all Polish politicians who are present on Twitter, two of them seem to be dominant if you look at the number of followers. Janusz Palikot and – already mentioned – Radosław

Sikorski have respectively almost 190 thousand and 164 thousand followers. Donald Tusk – as the third one – has got only around 100 thousand followers. It should be mentioned that Palikot joined Twitter 21st January 2010 and Sikorski merely a month later – 24th February 2010. Sławomir Nowak, former Minister of Transport, Adam Hofman, Member of the Polish Parliament, Wojciech Olejniczak, member of the EP, Bartosz Arłukowicz, Minister of Health and Jerzy Buzek, former President of the EP, started their adventure with Twitter earlier – respectively 21st July 2009, 25th July 2009, 3rd August 2009 and 14th January 2010. Though they have fewer followers and had published far fewer tweets till up until Christmas Eve 2013. Character of politicians’ activity is presented in the next figure – it shows how often they use Twitter during a day.

Fig. 2. The Average Number of Tweets per day (from start to 24.12.2013).



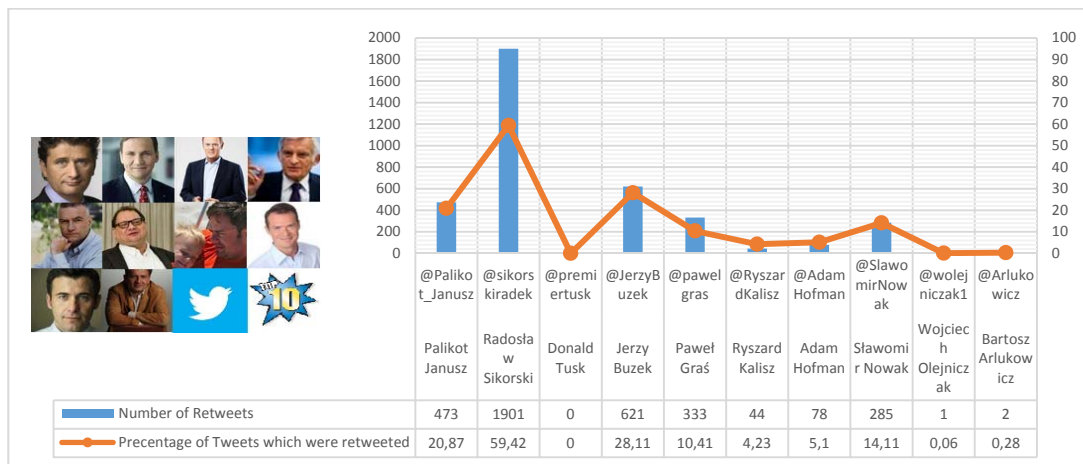
Source: own research.

Politicians who use Twitter the most are: Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs, leader of many comparisons at charts, and Paweł Graś, former spokesman of the Polish government: they reach almost five tweets per day. It

is worth mentioning that the most popular day for tweeting for most of the TOP 10 Polish politicians on Twitter is Friday (average: 17 percent.), Wednesday (16 percent.) and Thursday (16 percent.). Less popular is Sunday (average: 10 percent.) and Saturday (11 percent.). If we look at the most popular hours of tweeting, we notice that Polish politicians tweet at almost every hour of the day from 10 am to even 11 pm – most often at 10 am and 11 am (8 percent.), next at midday and 1 pm (7 percent.). What is worth mentioning is that some politicians like to tweet even at night – for instance Wojciech Olejniczak, Paweł Graś and Bartosz Arłukowicz tweeted more than 70 times at 12 am during the analysed period (what is more, Arłukowicz tweeted later than 1 am 43 times, Graś – 44 times). Radosław Sikorski starts tweeting very early – even starting at 5 or 6 o'clock. Two politicians – Sikorski and Hofman – tweeted during the analysed period at least once every hour. Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs tweeted the least frequently at about 2 am – 5 times. We can say that some of the Polish TOP 10 politicians on Twitter seem to have become addicted to this opinion-forming microblog.

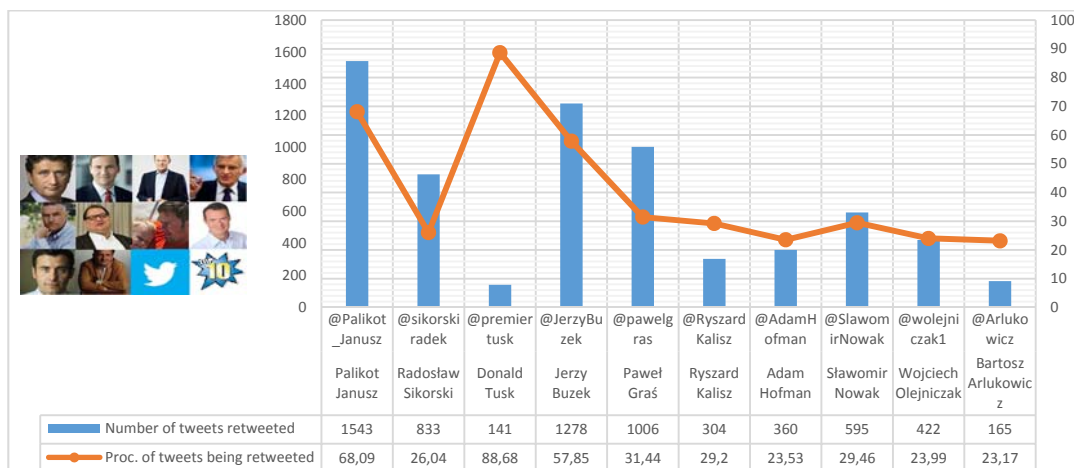
Next figure (no. 3) presents the analytic overview of the aggregated data, namely the index of dispersibility in which we combine the number of retweets and the percentage of tweets which were retweeted. It presents a scale of how politicians' accounts on Twitter influence the network discourse. To be more precise, how does the content of their tweets disperse on Twitter? It is directly connected with the idea of the index of discursivity which is presented in figure no. 4. In this context, discursivity is a possibility of putting certain hypotheses and problems in front of the network society by specific Twitter account, in this case politician's account.

Fig. 3. Dispersibility on Political Twitter (TOP10) (>3200).



Source: own research.

Fig. 4. Discursivity on political Twitter (>3200).



Source: own research.

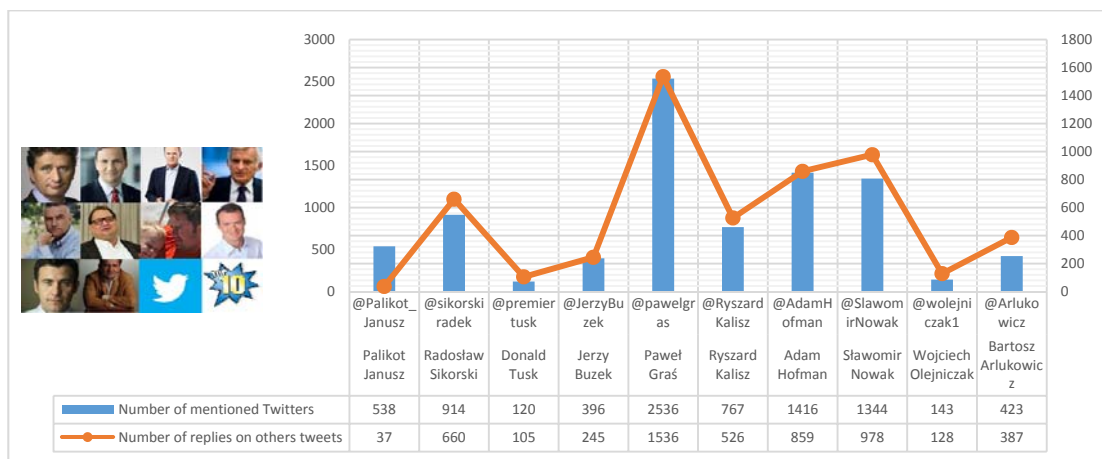
We have to bear in mind an important relation: the higher the number of retweets to someone’s tweets, the more this user is considered a valuable source of information by others. From this point of view – see figure no. 4 – the best results achieved Janusz Palikot, Jerzy Buzek and Paweł Graś. However, the biggest percentage of tweets retweeted were by Polish Prime Minister

Donald Tusk. Almost 90 percent of his tweets were retweeted by others. It means that his Twitter account is perceived as an outstandingly priceless source of information. Every nine in ten tweets was retweeted. If we focus on dispersibility, we will notice that the undeniable leader of political discourse in active navigating through Twitter is Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski (see figure no. 3). With almost 2000 retweets, he becomes the leader of **index of dispersibility**. Furthermore, almost 60 percent of these retweets were further retweeted. It means that the content which he retweeted on his Twitter account resonated in many areas of the net. This content achieved extra acceleration which we could name “disperse-kick”. The second politician in this list – Jerzy Buzek, former President of the EP – had merely 621 retweets and only one third of his tweets were retweeted. What is worth mentioning is the fact that the Polish Prime Minister’s account on Twitter has not got no retweets at all. Probably it is connected with his irregular, temporary activity on Twitter and the more frequent activity of the Polish Prime Minister's Office’s account. We can also see that Polish politicians in most cases are not interested in retweeting others. That is worth analysing. All in all, the Internet is not only about setting the agenda, it is also about generating discourse, interacting, being listened to and listening. This leads us once more to the question about the direct and bilateral relationship between politicians and citizen-surfers thanks to politicians’ accounts on Twitter.

The next figure presents the index of interactivity on political Twitter. In this schedule we combine two parameters – the number of Twitter users (hereafter referred to as Twitters) that were mentioned in tweets which were analysed on every politicians’ accounts on Twitter and the number of replies to the politicians’ tweets. The basis of this index is an assumption that if you have a bigger number of Twitters mentioned on your account (in your tweets), the more you interact with others. However, it is one thing to mention others in

your tweets, which is not always connected with interacting at all, and another to reply to specific tweets of other users of Twitter (followers, people that you follow and none of both). Combining these two perspectives allows us to point out who interacts the most on Twitter from our TOP 10 Polish politicians.

Fig. 5 Interactivity on political Twitter(>3200).



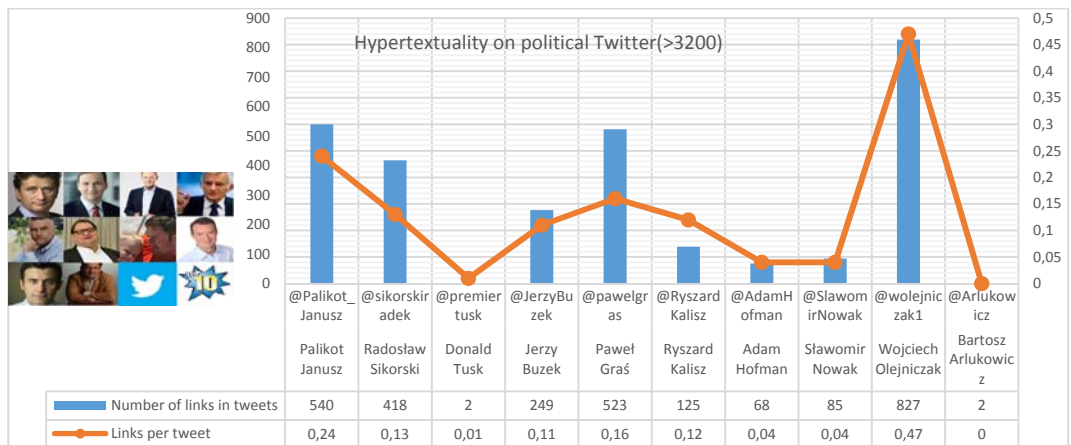
Source: own research.

As we can see, Paweł Graś, former spokesman of the Polish government, was unrivalled in both categories. This is likely explained by his function in the government. It is worth noting that our former leader in the index of dispersibility – Radosław Sikorski – is in fourth place only. Of course, to disperse the content of your tweets is not the same as to interact with this content in your tweets. These are two different attitudes to using Twitter. As before, the Polish Prime Minister had the worst results in the index of interactivity on political Twitter. What is worth researching further is mapping the network of Twitter users with whom our politicians interact the most – who are they? What do they do? What do they tweet about?

Figure no. 6 presents the index of hypertextuality on political Twitter. In this perspective we measure how much Twitter accounts of Polish

politicians promote different sources of network by including links in their tweets and how many of them – in the analysed sample – contained a link. Obviously it is a question about focusing attention of other users on specific sources on the Internet – blogs, fanpages, vertical or horizontal portals, political and party websites or maybe to very specific mass media – news, comments, features or interviews? It would be very interesting to create a map of external links which followers are referring to by politicians’ tweets. In the end the Internet is about sharing and linking different sources, that is why this index was named "hypertextual".

Fig. 6. Hypertextuality on political Twitter(>3200).



Source: own research.

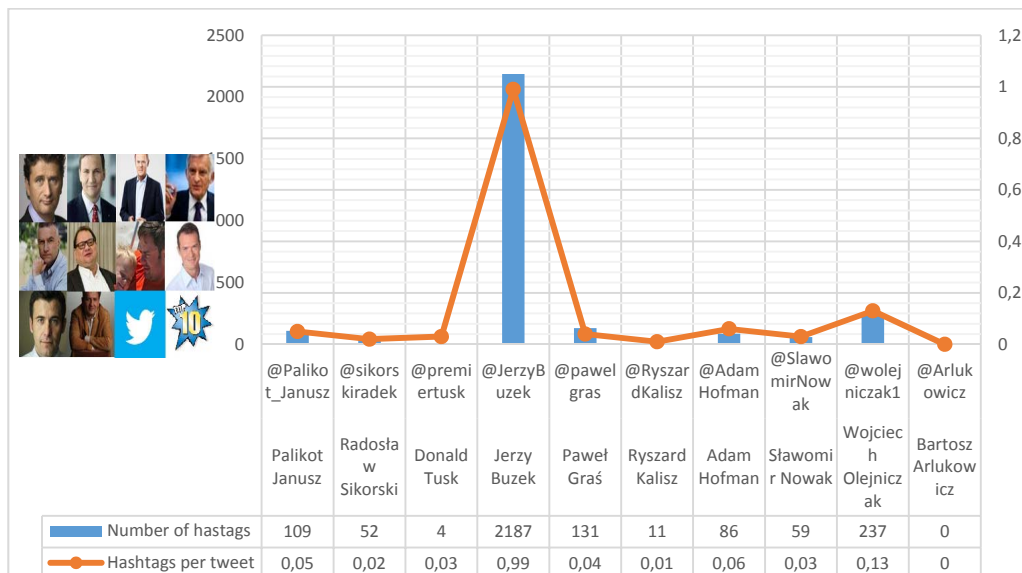
In this view, Wojciech Olejniczak, Member of the EP had the most hypertextual content of tweets. He included links in more than 800 of his tweets. That is why his Twitter account was rated as follows: 0.47 link per tweet. The second most hypertextual was Janusz Palikot, the leader of the Your Movement Party, whose 540 tweets included links with a rating of 0.24 link per tweet. The worst rates in the index of hypertextuality of politicians’ activity on Twitter

were achieved by – again – Prime Minister Donald Tusk and Bartosz Arłukowicz, Minister of Health in the Polish government.

The next figure (no. 7) presents the results of the index of intertextuality on political Twitter. According to the idea of hashtags, which help users to navigate through Twitter, the higher the number of hashtags in tweets, the more likely politicians' tweets are to be found by others. In this index, we check which politician from our TOP 10 are trying to participate in broader discourse (not only with their followers and followings who can very easily find politicians' tweets in their panel) thanks to using hashtags to mark their activity on Twitter in specific semiotic and associative frames. This is the main function of hashtags – to frame a problem, to create a proper association structure which can be easily discovered by others thanks to searching modes. From this point of view, the more you use hashtags, the more you can spread your message to a wider group of users. It is connected with the index of dispersibility. What must be underlined is the fact that the intertextuality in this index is directly connected with the idea of very easy and available searching for specific content, which are interesting for web surfers.

According to figure no. 7, only one politician from TOP 10 treats hashtags as a great tool to settle their tweets in a specific frames of discourse. It is Jerzy Buzek, member of the European Parliament, former President of the EP. The second is Wojciech Olejniczak, also a member of the EP. It seems that members of the EP are more likely to use this function in their activity on Twitter. It is possible that others simply do not know how to use hashtags nor for what purpose.

Fig. 7. Intertextuality on political – Twitter (>3200).



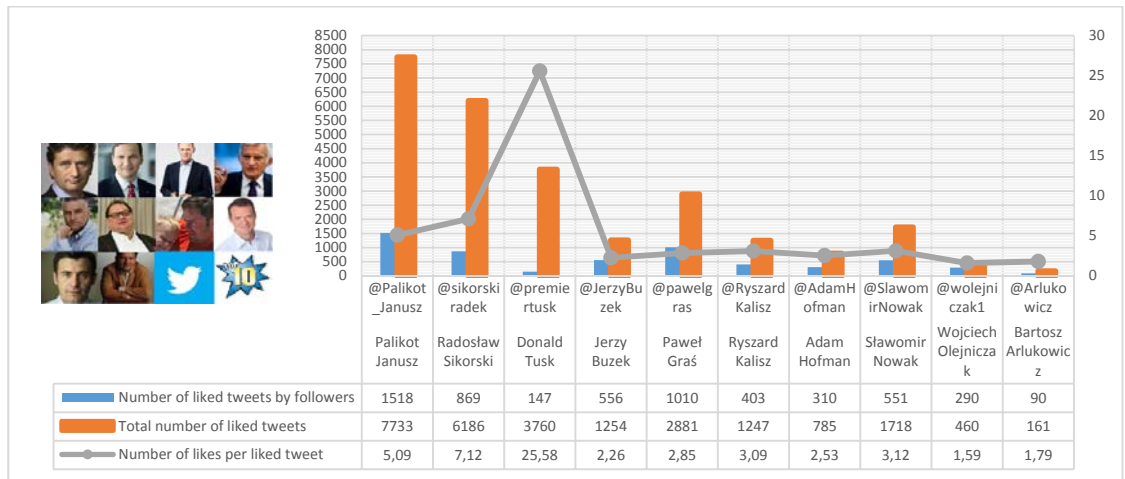
Source: own research.

Figure no. 8 deals with the idea of popularity on Twitter. The **index of popularity** consists of three elements. First of all – the number of tweets which were liked by followers (picked as the favourite – instead of "like" (FB), Twitter uses "favourite". This is a very simple measure. It is not like retweeting or replying which is directly connected with interaction on Twitter. We have to bear in mind that in most cases "retweets do not mean support". The same applied to replies, even to a greater extent because you can analyse the reply. Retweeting without a comment does not have to be so obvious. On the other hand, liking somebody's tweet seems to be quite understandable. In other words, a person who likes someone's activity on Twitter simply supports the content – the idea – of this particular tweet. What is also important is the total number of tweets, which were liked not only by followers. We should analyse this result in comparison with retweets. In every case – see figure no. 8 – this number is much bigger than the number of tweets liked by followers.

The reason for that lies in the idea of retweeting. One does not have to be a follower of Janusz Palikot to have an opportunity to like his tweet. We can like a particular tweet thanks to people who we follow and who have retweeted Palikot's tweet. This parameter in connection with the indexes of discursivity and dispersibility seems to be a fantastic measure of the impact of particular politician's Twitter activity on network discourse. The last component of the index of popularity – the third one – is the number of 'likes per liked tweet': the number of people on Twitter who marked as a favourite the tweet which was earlier liked by a politician. The bigger this number, the more selected politician's activity is popular on Twitter. Of course, we cannot anticipate what it exactly means to like tweets that were previously liked by a selected politician, but we can assume some possibilities. First – somebody likes / supports this particular politician as a person, as an activist, as a politician as a whole. Second – somebody likes / supports this particular activity of the politician – in this case liking someone's tweet. It means that somebody only agrees with the politician in this particular case. Third – somebody likes / supports this particular politician as a representative of his favourite party or ideology and he pays attention to the politician's activity on Twitter to a lesser extent. It is all about manifesting support – not selective support, but more generally. All in all, this index of popularity which could be combined with other ratios could be treated as a great measure of political support (maybe identification?) for particular actions, people, ideas or even whole parties and ideological movements. From this point of view, Twitter could be perceived as a tool of measuring potential support for specific ideas and actions before politician decide to announce them in the so-called "mainstream media". In this perspective, Twitter may be treated as a fantastic traverse for many concepts. You are able to discuss it, argue with citizens, journalists and scientists, finally you can try to persuade people of your ideas.

What is more, you can count on crude critique, pointing to the weakest and the strongest sides of the presented concept. In the end, you could always step back and admit that the selected idea / concept was not as good as it seemed to be. In this case, you will agree with citizens, which can be counted as an advantage. In other words – it would mean that you open to discussion, you are open-minded and there is always a possibility to persuade you. In both cases we deal with a win-win situation. All due to Twitter and its attributes, widely described in this paper. From this point of view, Twitter can be a fantastic place for public consultation, quasi-face to face – or rather tablet to tablet / smartphone to smartphone / computer to computer.

Fig. 8. Popularity on political Twitter (>3200).



Source: own research.

The most popular Twitter account was Janusz Palikot with 1518 liked tweets. Also Palikot had the biggest total number of liked tweets. However, the most popular person among TOP 10 politicians on Twitter seems to be Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk who had the biggest number of likes per liked tweet: more than 25. It means that for each tweet that he marked as favourite, more

than 25 people on Twitter liked this tweet too. Of course, Tusk liked much fewer tweets than other politicians, but despite that the ratio of likes per liked tweet was still several times higher than that of the second politician in – Radosław Sikorski – with the result of 7.12. This figure shows that the Polish Prime Minister enjoys considerable support on Twitter and has no equal among the TOP10. It would be very interesting to conduct research in which we analyse the Twitter activity of politicians who do not have the biggest number of followers (as it was done in this paper), but have got the biggest number of likes of tweets which were earlier marked by them as favourite. It should present politicians with the biggest support on Twitter¹⁰.

To sum up the presented data, it is worth raising the most important questions that can be put in front of the research conducted on Twitter. We have to remember that Twitter seems to be perceived as a very influential tool in modern politics. You can see the following relationship dependency: the more politicians use Twitter, the more important Twitter becomes, not only for users of this microblog platform but also for the rest of citizens who are not present on Twitter. Politicians tweet about many different issues which strongly affect citizens' everyday life. From this perspective, providing answers to the questions below seems to be one of the most important challenges for present researchers interested in Twitter as a political communication tool:

- How do governments, presidents, ministers, MPs but also various public institutions use Twitter?
- With whom do they tweet, whom do they reply and retweet the most? How frequently? Who is mentioned in tweets most often?

¹⁰ See the mechanisms functioning on Twitter – D. N. Greenwood, *Fame, Facebook, and Twitter: How Attitudes About Fame Predict Frequency and Nature of Social Media Use*, "Psychology of Popular Media Culture", 2013, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 222-236.

- From whom do they retweet contents – news, views, ideas? How frequently? When?
- What are the tweets about? Is it possible to define the key topics, frames, narratives?
- When do they tweet? (day / time of a day and night)
- Do politicians mostly prefer to inform or rather to interpret (comment) on Twitter?
- Is Twitter perceived as a medium of information or a medium of views?
- How many tweets relate to one's own action and how many relate to others' activity? (the problem issue of selfpromotion)
- What kind of tweets evoke discussion on Twitter – how long and how vivid? How many people participate in a discussion? How many people only follow the discussion? How many people share this discussion with others?
- In how many tweets do users include links to texts, pictures or videos? To which websites / sources are they linked?
- If they inform, to which sources do they transfer a link in their tweets?
- If they interpret / comment, to which websites do they propose a link in their tweets?

This is only a small number of questions or problems which should be solved in this context. Such research would provide complex answers to these questions and would be very instructive and revealing for many citizens and politicians around the world. We have to bear in mind that the Internet is full of many tools that can be used by researchers to analyse the activity of politicians on Twitter and other social media. We can list just a few: Twittonomy, Twitalyzer,

Sysomos, Hootsuit, TweetReach, Social Mention, Twazzup and Polish SoTrender or Newspoint. When it comes to politics, we can easily use e.g. Politwitter.ca, Politweeter.com (under construction)¹¹.

What is the direction of Twitter? – discussion

Alongside many unquestionable advantages of Twitter – after presentation of empiric data – we should notice and discuss some limitations of this web-phenomenon resulting from the assumptions of its creators (mentioned earlier). It is worth to mention its biggest drawback: in a situation where everyone tweets, who really reads? Who keeps track of it all? (We have to bear in mind that Twitter is now the fastest growing social platform in the whole world¹²) Furthermore, who understands the content, who thinks about the content they read? Twitter can be, and certainly is, the agora, but the question is: what kind of agora is it? Following the many people available on Twitter, sometimes I cannot resist the impression that really everyone speaks, writes, reports, exposes, suggests, imputes something etc. But the question is: how many of those who tweet simultaneously listen, respond, react and finally stay under the influence of other users? What is more, according to various studies, not more than 10 percent of web surfers are active on forums and blogs. In one of the latest reports on Twitter by Global Web Index (the research was conducted on 27 markets)¹³ asked the question: *Which online activities have you done in the past month*. The following answers were provided: almost 70 percent of respondents had watched an online video clip,

¹¹ See: R. Poynter, *The Handbook of Online and Social Media Research: Tools and Techniques for Market Researchers*, Chichester 2010, http://www.owlasylum.net/owl_underground/handbook_of_social_media_research.pdf, 25.01.2013.

¹² <http://blog.globalwebindex.net/twitter-now-the-fastest-growing-social-platform-in-the-world/>, 8.01.2014.

¹³ <http://globalwebindex.net/>, 8.01.2014.

50 percent had managed a social network profile and 35 percent had commented on a story, yet only 25 percent had written a blog post and fewer than 20 percent had written an article¹⁴. It means that the majority simply reads and browses the Internet, nothing more. Social media is just a little more complicated. What must be stressed is the fact that the present Internet – especially social media, which are one of the biggest actors – was built on the idea of sharing. We could name it as a “golden pentad” – share, retweet, like, follow, comment (rarely). According to Global Web Index reports, Internet users seem to be divided into two groups – active and passive users. The first one – the creators' group – is connected with creating new content, the second one – the contributors' group – with sharing this content. Taking into account various reports on web, for every creator there are approximately 10 contributors who are sharing creator's content further. Sometimes because they like it, sometimes because they are outraged. The motivation can be different, but the way of acting is always the same for every participant of these two groups. It is worth remembering that being a creator or a distributor is not only a name – a category – describing the user's activity. It seems to be a specific attitude which we cannot change as easily as we think. It is not only the way of behaving during surfing, it is the way of perceiving, understanding and being influenced by virtuality, especially in the social media world.

To sum up, being active in social media (less on Facebook, but undoubtedly by means of microblogging, including Twitter) is the need of probably the most interactive, talkative, politicised and assertive people – they can be named “the leaders”. If so, are those "leaders" also readers? When everyone speaks, who listens? The universality of using Twitter by representatives of various social classes makes that it really uncontrolled. It's

¹⁴ <http://blog.webcertain.com/global-web-users-like-to-share-content-rather-than-create-it/06/09/2011/>, 8.01.2014.

standardised social discourse seems to be getting oversized and swollen. Topics and content that occupy Internet users grow exponentially every day. Are all these things equally important? Probably not. Who will help the most passive Internet users select the most important ones?

What do we tweet about?

An interdisciplinary research project titled “Cyberemotions – collective emotions in cyberspace”¹⁵ funded by the European Union by means of the 7th Framework Programme assesses the role and methods of functioning of collective excitement among Internet-users. The project attended nine scientific and research institutions from six different European countries (Austria, Switzerland, Germany, Slovenia, the United Kingdom and Poland). They brought together specialists in the psychology of emotion, complex network theory, statistical physics, artificial intelligence and virtual reality. The result shows that Twitter users from Poland primarily tweet about their emotions, feelings, fears and fascinations. So it is a personal narration, often expiatory¹⁶. It appears that Twitter does not have to be and probably is not a realisation of dreams about the 21st century mature socio-political agora, which could reflect the idea of deliberative democracy of Jürgen Habermas by using new technologies.

¹⁵ <http://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/artykul/polacy-na-twitterze-komentuja-emocjonalnie-w-wiekszosci-pozytywnie>, 8.07.2013.

¹⁶ The report revealed that: 70 percent of comments published by Polish Twitter users on Twitter in 2012 were connected with emotions. Although most of them had a positive character (67 percent), entries with negative emotions were the strongest. They appeared mainly because of Polish athletes' failures, and most of them appeared after the matches during Euro 2012. Similar connotations had entries written when Poles lost a game against Russia in the quarterfinals of the volleyball tournament at the Olympics in London.

Twitter and the role of journalists

The revolution of new media seems to consist in a constant inflow of information from various sources to an Internet user who is able to choose whatever he wants, what he is curious about. However, there is always a question about knowledge, about proven information and in-depth analysis and finally, what is most important and what is not at all. On the Internet it is very easy to lose oneself. Communication noise seems to be very loud and it is really hard to spend some time selecting the most important news and views. Here we come to the gist. In many presentations about professional journalism, Michael Schudson, professor at the Columbia Journalism School, said that the main idea and at the same time a mission, for journalism, relies on explaining a surrounding world to people – what is worth mentioning and what is not, what has an impact on society and what is changing my everyday life. According to the professor of Columbia Journalism School, this role of journalists has not changed. Schudson outlines that right now – in the middle of the new media era – professional journalism is priceless in explaining the surrounding world. Journalists should and must help people – especially Internet users – find importance in this constant inflow of information and opinions from various web-sources (the idea of gate-keeping, priming, framing and agenda-setting). Prof. Schudson even jokes that if the modern world forgot about professional journalism, it would very quickly discover that it must re-invent journalism to simply understand today's rapidly changing world; on the internet you can find everything, but you have to invest your time and energy to search what is the most important.

To sum up, journalists help us. That is why the predictions on journalism's collapse are premature. For example Eryk Mistewicz in the book

*Anatomy of power*¹⁷ interviews the journalist Michał Karnowski and claims that soon politicians will not need journalists anymore because they will avoid them thanks to Twitter as citizens will prefer the direct relation with the government. The journalist is important for recipients to understand what is most important, to sort out news and handle the information chaos. Within minutes, Twitter displays in front of our eyes from a few to hundreds informations (tweets) – who can cope with such a challenge?

Twitter – the medium of winners – conclusion

Twitter is mainly used by politicians to announce their achievements, successes and – of course – stigmatizing negligence, errors and shortcomings of their political rivals. Under the principle of "first come, first served" basis, the splendour of success for the one who announces it to everyone. A good example is the Minister of Foreign Affairs – Radosław Sikorski – who could not resist and tweeted, informing Internet users and the financial markets that the Minister of Treasury would have good news for all Poles in the context of the new arrangements for Russian gas import prices. The same situation took place with the tweet written by the President of the European Commission – Herman Van Rompuy, and the government spokesman – Paweł Graś, citing a text message from the Prime Minister. That is why Twitter resonates well in other so-called "old media", such as press, radio and television. It is impossible today to deal with politics without tracking Twitter accounts of the political class. As a medium of winners, it is continuously becoming more important than the rest of the media. The last European Union summit demonstrates this. Instead of organizing a press conference in the middle of the night and responding to some kind of specific questions from journalists, which could

¹⁷ E. Mistewicz, M. Karnowski, *Anatomia władzy*, Warsaw 2010.

cover the enthusiasm and communication success, one entry on Twitter was enough. No questions asked, no conferences, but the success that can be attributed to that one who tweeted first. In terms of the image – only pluses, no disadvantages at all. This is the political communication 2.0 in times of post-politics¹⁸. Let us note that politicians do not tweet about difficult situations, conflicts or failures. Why? Because it is ambiguous, difficult to describe, there is no way to explain it in 140 characters. This was clearly visible on the Sławomir Nowak's (former Minister of Transport and Infrastructure) Twitter channel, where he unsuccessfully tried to explain the idea of locating numerous speed cameras on Polish roads. Again and again he wrote that it is not as obvious as it might seem at the first glance. This is a good example of how Twitter should not be used. You cannot write about the limitations of a microblogging platform, which you are using, you cannot write that this is not the place to talk about something serious. It is like cutting off the branch you are sitting on. Therefore, without a doubt, Twitter loves winners, those who are successful. It is an easy way, to inform the world about their successes and then just wait for the admiration and compliments. That is what happened after the European Union summit. I am sure that without the agreement neither Van Rompuy nor Donald Tusk and Paweł Graś would tweet in the middle of the night.

There is no doubt that Twitter seems to become one of the most popular tool of political communication for Polish politicians. However, not for everyone and not in the same way as we could see from presented results. Some of them – like Radosław Sikorski, Janusz Palikot or Jerzy Buzek are really involved in their activity on Twitter. They treat it really serious and they invest

¹⁸ See: T. Gackowski, *Political Image as the Substance of the Political Communication in the Era of Post-Politics*, "Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies", Volume III, Issue 4, October 2013, s. 40-63 – <http://www.ojcm.net/articles/34/344.pdf>, 25.01.2014.

their attention and a plenty of time to get to know what happens on Twitter. Others – like Donald Tusk and Bartosz Arlukowicz – seems to be on Twitter not because they want to, but they think that they have to, they need to for some closer undefined purpose. It is not an effect of some kind of strategic decision to communicate with their voters/citizens through Twitter. We could rather say that they treat Twitter as a some kind of fashion. This perspective seems to be connected with the atmosphere on Twitter which we will witness in the coming weeks, during the euoparliament campaign. In this time we will notice a great activity of polish candidates to European Parliament, especially on Twitter. They will comment on activity of each other in public sphere. They will announce their promises. They will debate with other candidates. Probably they will also accuse each other of various shortcomings and mistakes. However, after the elections probably their profiles on Twitter will be very quickly abandoned not only by followers, but especially by their own creators – authors (like it was last time after the EP's elections). Only a few of them – probably only those who will get into the European Parliament – will continue to communicate with their followers. Unfortunately those followers will again become only a citizens (from politicians' point of view), because – if we look at deserted profiles and accounts by politicians after last elections – being a voter seems to be a profession performed only once for a while and politicians know it very well. That's why, for most politicians, being on Twitter before elections is only a matter of marketing.

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Abstract

The article refers to the world's largest microblogging platform – Twitter.com. The author, in his reflections on mediatisation and virtualization of modern political communication, indicates changes that are undergoing right now in the social communication. He characterizes the specific nature of Twitter and tries to identify the source of its popularity. In the second part of the text, the author presents partial results of a research project dedicated to the activity of Polish politicians on Twitter. The author qualified the analysis to the ten Twitter profiles of Polish politicians who had the largest number of followers on 24 December 2013. The author, through the presentation of empirical results, considers methodological aspects of the analysis of politicians' activity on Twitter. Furthermore, he proposes certain indicators of research for the analysis of political communication in social media and stresses the need for research in virtual space, because – according to the author – it profoundly affects the thinking and perception of contemporary politicians about their role in the public sphere.

TOP 10 POLSKICH POLITYKÓW NA TWITTERZE – REWOLUCJA W KOMUNIKACJI POLITYCZNEJ? REKONESANS BADAWCZY

Abstrakt

Artykuł poświęcony jest największej na świecie platformie mikroblogowej – Twitter.com. Autor w swoich rozważaniach nad mediatyzacją i wirtualizacją współczesnej komunikacji politycznej wskazuje zmiany, jakie dokonują się na naszych oczach w zakresie szeroko rozumianej komunikacji społecznej. Charakteryzuje specyfikę Twittera oraz próbuje zidentyfikować źródła jego popularności. W drugiej części tekstu prezentuje częściowe wyniki projektu badawczego poświęconego aktywności polskich polityków na Twitterze. Analizie poddał profile dziesięciu polskich polityków, którzy mają największą

liczbę śledzących (ang. *followers*) na stan 24 grudnia 2013 r. Autor poprzez prezentację wyników empirycznych rozważa metodologiczne aspekty standaryzacji oceny aktywności polityków na Twitterze. Proponuje określone wskaźniki badawcze do analizy komunikacji politycznej w mediach społecznościowych oraz podkreśla konieczność prowadzenia badań w przestrzeni wirtualnej, gdyż – zdaniem autora – w sposób przemożny oddziałuje ona na sposób myślenia i postrzeganie własnej roli w przestrzeni publicznej współczesnych polityków.