Virtual Political Communication in Bulgaria

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Social networks are the result of a couple of circumstances such as the current development of communication technology and the improvement of the opportunities for communication, access to new ideas, web-based information, electronic resources and database serving millions of people all over the world. Social networks have increased their public influence, which contain videotaped speeches and presentations. Multimodality has become a characteristic feature of contemporary political virtual communication. Bulgarian politicians appreciate the Internet as a tool for building popularity in its wealth of features, forms, and modes. Communicative tools and techniques have changed. The forms of the Bulgarian political communication found in the virtual environment such as sites, blogs, social networks, video clips, virtual forums, etc. are heterogeneous. Bulgarian citizens accept the Internet as a tool for increased political and social activities. Civil oratory, which is seen as a mechanism for efficient organizing of public events during election campaigns, protests, and demonstrations, is also present in the social networks. The citizens use a combination of verbal and visual elements; they are bloggers and participants in virtual political forums and actively participate in the spread of all kinds of forms of the social networks. They take part in the street demonstrations and organize performances; they ridicule politicians through posters and cartoons published online. Verbal and visual messages of the citizens come to real life during the protests and to virtual life in the social networks. The polyphony of social networks is a manifestation of virtual civil communication where the citizens in their virtual projection as netizens build up a new complex model of communication.

Keywords: virtual political communication, sites, blogs, social networks, virtual political forums

Introduction

Bulgarian society, market, political system, and political communication have undergone considerable transformations since 1989 in effect of political, cultural, technological, social, psychological, and media factors. During the last 10 years, the Internet has been playing a key role in different spheres of the contemporary Bulgarian society and in particular in the policy.

The political communication in Bulgaria is remarkable for its heterogeneity: speeches delivered during street meetings, media participations and debates, demonstrations and protests, state political discourse, official statements, international negotiations, events, actions, press-conferences, politicians' interviews, and presentations posted on the Internet. Bulgarian politicians use verbal tools, but some speakers prefer to include visual elements in presenting their political ideas, slogans, appeals, and messages. Official political communication is also interpreted as a function of the state institutions, political parties, unions, movements, blocks, and NGOs. Civil rhetoric has also undergone changes during the protests and demonstrations and Bulgarian citizens have achieved a greater clarity in stating their demands and requests. At the same time the

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participants in the protests use the Internet and in particular the social network Facebook and rarely political virtual forums, as well as the political blogs and personal politicians' blogs turning them into virtual tribunes. Bulgarian citizens broadcast presentations, video clips, appeals, petitions, programs, and civil requests presenting them in front of their virtual audiences and societies.

The hypothesis is that a growing number of Bulgarian politicians and state institutions accept the Internet as a tool for broadcasting information; they prefer the monolog manner of political speaking; they re-present preliminary announced messages and they write and re-write political appeals. Citizens accept the Internet as a tool for information, organization, and mobilization, using Facebook as an instrument for citizen's activation and acceleration of the protests, and they try to combine effectively the digital literacy and political activities.

Brief Theoretical Observation and Framework

Since political communication and rhetoric operate in new environment, such as the Internet, it is necessary to provide relatively new terms introduced by the scientists. Terminological diversity is a result of the attempts to define the notions which are relatively new in different sciences. We try to present briefly some groups of terms concerning Internet political communication.

David Warnick prefers the term *online rhetoric* (Warnick, 2007). Marchin Lewinski investigates online forums using pragma-dialectical method and he prefers the terms *online argumentation*, *argumentation design*, and *computer-mediated argumentation* (Lewinski, 2010, p. 37).

In Bulgaria there is an interest in researching the current processes in society from different scientific perspectives: political science, sociology, media studies, and cultural science. The new terminological phrases become firmly established and formalized: *e-politics*, *e-citizens*, *e-street*, *e-citizenship* (Krasteva, 2011).

The terms of the second group are created following the same derivational model and scientists tend to show preference for the adjective "virtual": *virtual politicians* (Wilson, 2001, pp. 60-68), *virtual citizens* (Dichev, 2010, pp. 14-44). The author accepts that there are reasons to introduce the term *virtual rhetoric* (Mavrodieva, 2010, p. 80). It can be used to the complex notion covered by the following definition:

> V*irtual political rhetoric* includes different kinds of oratory, i.e. speeches of politicians and statesmen delivered in virtual environments as synchronous and a-synchronous computer-mediated communication, as well as the use of the Internet opportunities (in particular Web 2.0) when the political orator publishes online video-typed speeches, lectures, reports, presentations or participations in dialogue formats, e.g. conferences, debates, discussions, round-tables, press-conferences; it also includes the readiness of the orators to take part in the interactive communication spaces applying verbal, visual and non-verbal tools. (Mavrodieva, 2012, p. 282)

The term *visual rhetoric* is also approved of and used and the authors say that "Visual rhetoric questions the persuasiveness of images, and of the devices that are used to persuade us." (Broek et al., 2012, p. 89).

The next group of terms and notions are created using the adjective "digital". For example: James Zappen uses the term *digital rhetoric* (Zappen, 2005, pp. 319-325). Hristo Prodanov submits the terms *digital policy*, *digital culture*, *digital economy* (Prodanov, 2012, p. 76). Anna Krasteva explains the meaning of the terms *digital citizens* (Krasteva, 2013, pp. 7-48), *digital democracy* (Krasteva, 2013, p. 99), *digital individual/person* (Krasteva, 2013, p. 46). Gilles Rouet gives information about *digital precipice* and *digital division* (Rouet, 2013, p. 77). Marcelo Vitali Rossati lights the notion *digital space* (Rossati, 2013, p. 90). This multiple group includes terms which win recognition as preferable investigating different manifestations of policy, political communication, political events, and political campaigns on the Internet.

It is reasonable, too, to use the terms *political virtual communication* and *political visual communication* to designate the speeches and statements of politicians. From our point of view, it is one of manifestation of digital activism of politicians and in particular—Bulgarian political leaders. C*ivil virtual communication* has manifestation of digital activism in Bulgaria and some of them are utterances and messages delivered or posted by citizens. The terms *civil virtual communication* or *digital communication of citizens* are used in the current article to designate the same basic notion. It is also necessary in this line to make two clarifications: Firstly, the term *civil virtual communication* designates speaking of citizens on current political topics; secondly, from a theoretical point of view *civil virtual communication* is a sub-kind of political communication. The communication of citizens has its forms of manifestation in the global network: sites, portals, virtual forums, blogs, social networks, and Bulgarians post claims, appeals, photos, statements, video clips. This kind of civil virtual communication on the Internet is not the traditional authentic political discourse. The communication of the citizens is referred to as *digital civic rhetoric* or *virtual civil rhetoric*.

Methodology

The research model includes three kinds of analysis: the first type is analysis of the political communicative situations offline and online during the last decade in Bulgaria; the second type of analysis tries to identify the factors that determine the features of the new phenomena of digital activism of Bulgarian politicians and citizens; and the third type includes analysis of new manifestations of official communication of parties and civil activities in political blogs, the social network Facebook, forums, and online media. The corpus is wide enough and it has the following features: representativeness, systematization, relevant choice and selection of the posts, and comments in social networks as well as of the posts in political virtual forums.

Corpus of Research

The corpus covers data from the period from January 2010 till August 2014. Since the materials are heterogeneous, they are divided into several sub-corpora. The first sub-group concerns the sites and blogs of politicians, state institutions, and political parties. The second group includes the speeches, PR messages presented on the Internet and in particular in online media. The third subgroup combines online coverage of politicians, organizers of the protests and protesters presented in Bulgarian politicians' and citizens' sites and blogs. The fourth group contains information from social networks, mainly Facebook. Each of the sub-corpora is analyzed by applying a different method or a relevant combination of methods, which are described further in the article.

Virtual Political Communication of Bulgarian Politicians

Political platforms, programs, and speeches take up a due space in party, institutional and political sites. The different institutions post the main text but it is often accompanied by videotaped presentations on separate sub-themes in their sites. It is a kind of paradox that even so Bulgarian political rhetoric has a relatively limited presence in the Internet. The sites of the Bulgarian President, the National Assembly and the Council of Ministries consistently, present the official information and in particular presidential, parliamentary and ministerial rhetoric on the Internet.

The presidential institution was established in Bulgaria after 1990 and presidential oratory has relatively brief history. There are stable tendencies turning into a tradition in Bulgarian presidential activities and rhetoric

and their manifestations in the virtual space: Since 1998 the site of the presidency has been playing the role of a virtual library[1]. Every important event, speech, statement, conference, press-conference, and interview is presented as verbal information as well as visual elements (photos, video clips). The observation manifests a development and improvement of our rhetorical literacy, the PR specialists name correctly kind of event and the rhetorical genres: speech, report, lecture, etc.. The former Bulgarian president Petar Stoyanov has his personal site[2] and he shares key political speeches, public comments, participations in media broadcasts during his presidential mandate (1997-2001) and after 2001—as an active politician. During the election campaign in 2011 every candidate for Bulgarian president had a site or blog made popular and the most active one is Meglena Kuneva[3]. The institutional and personal sites and blogs of the Bulgarian candidate-presidents and presidents are virtual libraries and simultaneously they are the tools to create and establish their individual images.

Parliamentary rhetoric consists of oral messages (speeches, addresses, reports, declarations, questions, answers, etc.) during the debates in the plenary hall and during the meetings in the parliamentary commissions. For the last 24 years the National Assembly has gained experience, and parliamentary debates have been marked by achievements and crises; positive and negative phenomena in the work of this legislative institution of government are mixed, but rhetoric has its success. The debates in the plenary hall since 1990, data from the parliament commissions, visual presentations, and virtual guide are to be found on the site of the Bulgarian parliament[4]. Simultaneously, as a parallel format, after 2010 *Online parliament* was started, and virtual plenary hall is only one of the elements of this alternative kind of rhetoric in the contemporary Bulgarian society[5]. The themes of the site include online rules, online MPs, online topics, online forums, media monitoring of the work of the National Assembly, etc..

The term *ministry rhetoric* is used to designate institutional communication and rhetorical outcomes of the prime-minister, the ministers. and deputy-ministers for the time of their mandate as members of the Council of Ministers. Some ministers deliver key speeches as part of internal and external events, negotiation and meetings. Selected statements and declarations are published on the site of the Council of Ministers[6] and on the sites of the other ministries. The sites are a part of the institutional PR and the government prefers official communication channels to publish statements concerning its work.

Political presentations are relatively new but at the same time a dynamically developing and attractive form of contemporary Bulgarian political rhetoric. Politicians' presentations are a part of the direct meeting with the party members and electorate. *Political press-conferences* are a mechanism of political PR and they are not seen as a separate rhetorical genre. Some political press-conferences in Bulgaria have been transformed from dialogical public communication to controversial exchange of politicians and journalists. Some political presentations and press-conferences are posted in the complex form of text and video clips on the party sites, politicians' blogs, and as links to Facebook walls. Consequently they are published by the politicians on the Internet and it is an act of traditional and well-known digital activism.

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[1] http://president.bg/

[2] http://www.petarstoyanov.com

[3] http://meglenakuneva.bg

[4] http://www.parliament.bg/

[5] http://www.on-parliament.com/

[6] http://www.government.bg/

From a communicative point of view the situation is changed. Politicians prefer to use blogs as a personal virtual tribune. They write posts, publish videotaped speeches and presentations delivered by them, create online content, and use popular and readable language and semi-formal manner of layout to inform the party members, electorate, and citizens about their position, ideas, and projects. Blogs are a tool to establish personal political publicity. The political blogs are used in accordance with the features and opportunities of the Web 2.0. Metaphorically speaking, the *Bulgarian political blogs* are a part of the *Bulgarian virtual political communication* but the absence of a dialogue between the politicians—bloggers and the citizens in the virtual space lead to the conclusion that it is not reasonable to use the term *digitalised agora* in reference to the described political environment. Most of the video clips including political speeches or parts of them are posted in the personal political blogs and social networks, i.e. they have a secondary virtual audience[7].

Virtual Communication of Bulgarian Citizens

Some of the representatives of the Bulgarian Net generation are active citizens and they accept that Web 2.0 creates space for freedom of speech and gives them good opportunities to take part in the processes of the civil society. They prefer the model of digital activism which is expressed in two groups of practical activities concerning (1) the web spaces in its broad usage, and (2) the blogosphere:

They initiate the topics and in the role of e-communicators they send the messages to netizens. They are very active in the virtual space. E-communicators prefer broadcasting of messages, re-writing of main slogans, and sharing the appeals. They understand that the verification of information posted in Facebook is very important and they check the sources of other appeals and at the same time they show clearly the link to their messages. Digital activism of Bulgarian netizens has an additional feature: They write comments and take part in interactive communication in the virtual space and in the dialogues in virtual political forums.

The Bulgarian political blogosphere includes blogs of politicians and blogs of active citizens who write on current political themes. It reasonably includes posts, video clips, speeches, debates, conferences, press-conferences. Most of the Bulgarian political bloggers have experience in preparing and publishing the posts in their blogs. Some Bulgarian bloggers write on the hot political topics and some of them are digital political activists in the virtual space. It is very interesting to add same facts concerning blogs and political bloggers in Bulgaria. Some celebrated journalists are very active bloggers and they prefer to express their personal positions as citizens in their blogs, for example Ivo Indjev[8], Ivan Bedrov[9], Nicolay Barekov[10], etc.. Other popular blogger are Edvin Sugarev[11] and Atanas Sterev[12]. These bloggers are key opinion leaders in the virtual space and they present new kinds of digital activism of the Bulgarian citizens, and it is a new kind of digital citizenship. It is reasonable to conclude that there are two Bulgarian sub-political blogospheres: One of them is official or semi-official and the second one could be termed as *civil*. Analyzing virtual communication, we conclude that at the end of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 21st century it is different from the direct political communication in traditional forms of media.

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[7] http://www.btsekov.com/, http://www.sevlievski.com/, http://asenov2007.wordpress.com/, http://www.gerganagrancharova.eu/, http://www.gerganapassy.eu/, http://www.martindimitrov.com/, http://www.nikolaikamov.com/, http://www.kpetkov.eu, http://nmladenov.blog.bg/, http://www.avramov.com/blog/, http://politics.bogomil.info/, http://www.teodordetchev.com/, http://www.kadiev.bg/blog/, http://www.kalfin.eu/

[8] http://ivo.bg/

[9] http://ivanbedrov.com/

[10] http://barekov.com/

[11] http://www.svobodata.com/

[12] http://www.atanas-shterev.com/

Different models of political speaking are displayed in the *video clips* created during the election campaigns, for example the site of the political party "Ataka"[13], in the rubric "video archive". This is the first way of sharing political speeches on the sites and blogs. The second way includes re-publishing of the same speeches on the social network Facebook. The official, semi-official, and unofficial approaches to sharing political oratory by Bulgarian citizens are another way to broadcast it. Thus political communication has a parallel virtual life and each user can share the political speech or presentation on the Internet a single time or many times and it is one of the features of Web 2.0. Some users of the Net are not creators of the content but they share the information and they establish a new focus on the other topics using virtual forums and social networks[14].

Digital civil communication includes clear words and short sentences. The leaders of the protests (2012-2013) avoided sophisticated verbal style and metaphorical language. The protesters introduce and make popular through their posts new terms: *civil quota*, *civil control*, *civil board*, *civil participation in the decision making process*, *institutionalization of the civil participation*, *civil control over state institutions*, *national protest*, *international investigation* etc.. Such words and phrases cannot be defined as official ideological language but they are a proof of a process of growing maturity of the civil society in Bulgaria. The neologisms in political discourse are created spontaneously and they become popular through the civil rhetoric. Messages are always customized when the speaker is not a typical institutionalized leader, but the collective result of such texts shows another kind of civic participation and self-organization of the protesters.

Bulgarian citizens create the content and share the posts using social networks. They are e-citizens and digital web-writers. Bulgarian citizens improve the skills of the digital communication and verify the official information presented by the state institutions. They create new information without official channels and they present their point of view. The disappointment with political leaders, political parties, and the state institution is a result of the destruction of one of the three basic rhetorical principals—ethos. Bulgarian citizens have ceased to believe political rhetoric because they compare the real situation with the official statements, disguise the sophisticated promises, and avoid being passive recipients of the political rhetoric—oral or virtual. The author completely agrees with the position presented by Maria Zaleska that *ethos* has connections with credibility, a factor for identification as well of both the orator and the audience (Zaleska, 2012, pp. 29-50) .

Virtual forums are not a place or a space where communication falls in one of the classical types—political orator–speech–audience. The members of the Bulgarian society take part in the virtual forums initiated and organised by them[15]. The participants in the virtual political forums write their comments but some of them include visual elements (photos, caricatures, parodies of real politicians' speeches, video clips, presentations, party's symbols, posters, flyers, pictures, etc.).

The different models of political speaking are contained in *video clips* created during election campaigns. Most of these video clips are posted in party sites, political blogs and social networks, i.e. they have a secondary virtual audience. Traditional political communication is presented in *social networks*. Video clips, videotaped speeches from election campaigns created by the experts of political PR as well as the parodies created by Bulgarian citizens are posted and shared on *YouTube*, *Vbox7* (Bulgarian variant of YouTube),

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[13] http://www.ataka.bg/
[14] http://vbox7.com/play:6b68e82a7a, http://vbox7.com/play:1baaba2b6f
[15] http://forum.bulgarianhistory.org/viewforum.php?f=43, http://www.politika1.com/forum/

Facebook, and *Twitter*. Political communication is produced on the Internet mainly as official posts by PR departments of state institutions, media, and non-governmental organizations. The access to political rhetoric has increased the attendance and become easier. Everyone has the opportunity to listen, watch or read the speeches at any time. Bulgarian citizens are very active netizens and they write, post, broadcast, and share their comments in forums and in social networks, especially on Facebook. We can assume that there are two parallel ways: formal and informal to publish political statements; politicians and state institutions prefer the official way but Bulgarian citizens combine both of them. It is reasonable to say that they are more active in social networks, these sites and blogs during the last three years.

It is obvious that the traditional communicative situation is changed. Traditional institutional and party speaking is different in comparison with online behaviour of digital natives who are active netizens. Politicians prefer monological speaking but the citizens take part in virtual dialogues. Politicians avoid taking part in the virtual forums and they use mediators, and in particular—trolls. Party management initiates, controls, and mediates the process of broadcasting of messages. Leaders of parties have solid political experience but they do not have solid and modern manner to take part in virtual debates and social networks, digital competence is reduced. On the contrary, Bulgarian citizens are active and skilful netizens, most of whom have digital competence but they do not have experience to take part in direct political negotiations. Politicians authorize the party members to share political slogans and messages but citizens avoid hierarchical communication; from their point of view social networks are a tool for mobilization and increase of civil activism. Digital activism supports political activism. It is not possible to conclude that Bulgarian citizens have the expertise and experience to take part in the agenda setting based on the application of their digital competence and experience. It is reasonable to assume that there are two parallel and at the same time unequal processes: Bulgarian politicians have solid political experience and quite limited digital competence, but Bulgarian citizens have solid digital competence and insufficient experience in the political life, political negotiations, and political processes.

Cross Points in the Communication of Bulgarian Politicians and Citizens

The behaviour of the *political trolls* is analysed, too, and there are specific reasons for isolating this type of political rhetoric. First comes the need to investigate how the participants in virtual political exchange express party opinions but not personal positions as citizens. The assumption of some Bulgarian bloggers and journalists is that some Bulgarian *political trolls* are employed by party managers and probably some of them are remunerated or rewarded for their digital activity. The second reason for investigating the speech behaviour of political trolls is to prove the hypothesis that spontaneity is absent or reduced as an element of virtual behaviour. The third reason is that trolls avoid presenting proof, and they post on Facebook walls or virtual forums preliminary prepared sentences and arguments, and constructive virtual dialogue between trolls is not possible. This kind of digital activism combines political and party activities and personal mediated communication in virtual space especially social networks and political forums. As a result virtual communicative situation is changed; the messages are broadcast by many senders across many mediators to many receivers in virtual environments.

One of the models of digital activism of politicians is a further projection on the Internet of their well-known model of public speaking and includes direct communication and official manner to send political messages and slogans from party leaders to receivers who are members of the party, followers or sympathizers.

It is reasonable to add information about the origin of the messages and slogans; they are created by experts on political management and political PR who work offline in a team or by themselves. The parties select virtual mediators who broadcast preliminary prepared messages to hard electorate and netizens who prefer online communication. We use the term "*virtual mediators*" conditionally and the scope of the notions include digital parties activists and political trolls, too. This negative phenomenon of the digital citizenship of political parties and citizens is complicated and it is displayed on some levels: creating of messages, broadcasting messages, sharing messages, supporting online and offline activities, and comments of posts of political forums and social networks. The political managers of parties as a whole do not have sufficient digital competence and party leaders use "virtual mediators" who have digital literacy, but who do not have solid political background, stable political attitudes, conscious and permanent participation in party activities.

The proofs confirming this assumption are selected after the analysis of some online media. The first exampe in that line is "Bivol" ("Биволъ, BSP Leaks"), a site publishing articles of the investigating journalists. The title of the article is "An army of anonymous Red Guards of the BSP mobilized for the zombing of the society PUBLIC zombie"—"Армия анонимни хунвейбини на БСП мобилизирана за обществено зомбиране". The additional infromation includes the facts that 672 *trolls* produced 10,154 comments in the favour of the BSP. February 11, 2014, 15:28, 16,847 visitors[16].

Another online media, "Vesti", quoted the site "Bivol" and added an article entitled *Bivol: Internet "trolls" with thousand comments in the favour of the BSP* (Интернет "тролове" с хиляди коментари в полза на БСП)[17]. The observation and analysis give sufficient fact to conclude that big political parties in Bulgaria use trolls: Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria (CEDB), Democrats for Powerful Bulgaria (DPB) which follow different political ideology in comparison of the BSP. For example, the publication "Encyclopaedia of small political trolls" ("Енциклопедия на дребните политически тролове") confirms the assumption of the website http://avtorski.pogled.info/article/52368/Entsiklopediya-na-drebnite-politicheski-trolove. Some publications of online media Web Cafe[18] give information to reach the conclusion that political trolls are negative manifestation of digital activism. The similar position is presented by Frog News[19]. Konstantin Valkov who is a journalist from *Darik Radio* published the article "Run! The trolls are coming!" ("Бягай, троловете идват!") in the newspaper "24 hours" ("24 часа"), and he comments on the activities of political trolls during the election campaigns[20]. The journalist concludes that it is a negative phenomenon of digital activism of politicians and citizens in the current political life in Bulgaria. This phenomenon is named "trolling" ("тролене") in online media. Konstantin Pavlov-Komitata published the article "War of the trolls" in Offnews[21]. He describes different kinds of trolls: some of them are spontaneous, but others follow the norms of netiquette; however, the greater part of political trolls take part in the negative virtual political communication in Bulgaria and it is a display of a specific digital activism in the visual space.

In conclusion it can be said that political trolls are a mechanism or meta tool of negative digital activism of Bulgarian politicians.

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[16] https://www.bivol.bg/bsptrolls1.html. BSPTrolls
[17] http://www.vesti.bg/bulgaria/politika/internet-trolove-s-hiliadi-komentari-v-polza-na-bsp-6005169
[18] http://www.webcafe.bg/id_904201551_Trolovete_perat_nay-dobre
[19] http://frognews.bg/news_70401/
[20] http://www.24chasa.bg/Article.asp?ArticleId=4262282
[21] http://offnews.bg/ on 18.08.2014

Conclusion

Activism of Bulgarian politicians on the sites, blogs, and social networks makes an impact on Bulgarian citizens and the main function of such forms is to give information about a new party, coalition, ideology, platform, negotiations, decisions, etc.. Bulgarian politicians accept sites and blogs as digital tribune and social networks as e-agora or as virtual dialogues. The forms of Bulgarian political communication in virtual environment such as sites, blogs, social networks, video clips, virtual forums, etc. are heterogeneous. Simultaneously the state institutions prefer well-known forms of communication and avoid taking part in interactive exchange with citizens using social networks and virtual forums. The messages and appeals are delivered by politicians in front of virtual audiences quite rarely because they follow the redundant model of re-presentations of speeches, presentations, press-conferences, and debates on the Internet. At the same time citizen's digital activism increases the influences under members of the civil society and political situation in Bulgaria. The virtual civil communication is accepted by citizens as a tool to persuade and convince hundreds or thousands of people in Bulgaria and involves them in political activities, events, and processes in the civil society. Communication tools and techniques have changed, including verbal and visual elements; the citizens combine digital literacy with good argumentative skills. The digital activism of Bulgarian politicians was accelerated during the political crises and election campaigns. The digital activism of Bulgarian citizens has manifestation as a participation in virtual political forums and discussions and the social networks, and it is accepted as a mechanism for mobilization during protests and demonstrations. Summarising can be concluded that the digital activism of Bulgarian citizens and politicians has different manifestations and it has been developed irregularly as a result of the evaluation of the opportunities of Web 2.0, different digital competences, attitudes to use new communicative channels and to take part in virtual dialogue and interactive communication.

The political and party PR managers follow the model of hierarchical communication, but citizens prefer horizontal communication. Digital activism has grown as a part of the political management and political PR. Bulgarian politicians follow the well-known model from direct and media political communication and they adapt it to new circumstances in the virtual environment. The main aim is to inform the party members and electorate and to re-present messages created before the posted forms of virtual communication. Posting in social networks, they make their position redundant. Simultaneously they prefer mediated communication to personal exchange. As a result, more political parties pay to Bulgarians, especially to representatives of the Net generation who play the role of trolls. They post, broadcast, and share messages created preliminary by experts on political PR. Very often the netizens discover that such messages, arguments, and slogans are not results of personal political activism of the netizens. Bulgarian citizens have started to develop the sense of affiliation in virtual citizens communities and to establish their own model of digital political activity and virtual citizenship.

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