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Social Media Use in Public Administration: The Case of Facebook Use by Czech Regions

David Špaček[1]

Abstract

Available data on internet use by citizens indicate that participation in social networking represented one of the most common online activities in the EU-28 in 2016. Social media have been perceived as new tools that can enhance participation and inclusion of citizens and other important stakeholders in public decision-making for several years. According to available literature, the use of social media may also drive innovation in public service delivery and government operations. Research on the use of social media by Czech public authorities is rather limited and is still in its beginnings. The paper outlines results of web-based analysis that focused on the use of Facebook (FB) by Czech regions. Findings on practices of 13 regions (i.e. all regions in Czechia, excluding Prague for its specifics) are presented. They clearly indicate that FB is used particularly as a one-way communication channel only for some kinds of information, rather than an instrument for including citizens into public deliberations. This is in compliance with research on practices in developed as well as in transition countries. Data also show rather heterogeneous practices related to types of information that are published on FB profiles of Czech regions.

Keywords:
social media use in public administration, Facebook usage in public administration

1. Introduction

Regardless of problems with a consensus about definitions of social media (e.g. El Ouirdi et al. 2014; Oliveira and Welch 2013), social media in government are becoming one of the major trends in e-government research and practice worldwide (Criado et al. 2013), and social media use has the potential to change orga-

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1   Associate Professor, Masaryk University, Faculty of Economics and Administration, Department of Public Economics, Brno, Czech Republic.

nizational practices, processes, and cultures (Olsson and Eriksson 2016). Governments are adopting social media to provide complementary information dissemination, communication, and participation channels whereby citizens can access government and government officials and make informed decisions (Song and Lee 2015). According to Jukić and Merlak (2016) social media (including social networks) are one of the strongest marketing tools used by private companies in the last five years, and private entities have soon recognized that almost two billion social media users represent a large potential for their image building, marketing of services and/or products, improved customer service, and user involvement in the development of new products and services. Mickoleit (2014) points out that social media offer new opportunities to reduce political exclusion and that governments can leverage this potential to design public policies and services in more iterative, collaborative and responsive ways. Use of social media may also drive innovation in public service delivery and government operations. Although social media platforms and Web 2.0 technology are available for public organizations to adopt and incorporate into their daily routine, research finds that organizational cultures are not changing at the same rate and thus are slow to embrace large amounts of public feedback (Knox 2016).

The paper deals with the question how Facebook is used by Czech regions for communication with citizens and outlines main patterns and shortcomings. The available Eurostat data (2017) indicate that the number of Czech citizens participating in social networks is growing. In the country, 54 % of individuals aged 16 to 74 used the internet for participating in social networks in 2016, but only 6 % of individuals used the internet for posting opinions on civic or political issues via websites in 2015 (the EU-28 average was 13 % and the EU-15 average 14 %). Literature that would focus on social media usage in Czech public administration is missing, outdated or presents only partial findings that resulted from research focused primarily on other aspects. For instance, Špaček surveyed the usage of Facebook (FB) profiles by regions in 2014, but without following any specific methodology. The paper does not focus on social uses of social technologies (recently, relevant literature has been summarized by Harris and McCabe 2017). The research was motivated by the fact that literature on social media usage in Czech public administration is scarce. Another motive was to find out if former findings are still valid or if there was a shift in practices of regions and whether they use FB more not only in order to inform their citizens, but also to include them or obtain their input into public decision-making processes.

The paper is not focused on municipalities, on which available research usually concentrates. It deals with practices of regions for various reasons. Because there are more than 6,200 municipalities in Czechia, regions represent a more homogeneous group of institutions for surveys. Since Czech regions have between 300 and 820 thousand inhabitants and they are self-governmental units with directly elected regional councillors, there is a clear potential of social networks for them. By using

FB regions can also raise citizens' awareness of the role of regions that are sometimes perceived as rather unknown to citizens although they have been functioning since Autumn 2011 (for instance there was a 34.57 % voter turnout in elections to regional councils in October 2016, compared to 44.46 % voter turnout in the case of elections to municipal councils in October 2014 or to 60.84 % voter turnout in general elections to the Chamber of Deputies in October 2017). Regions represent higher self-governmental units in the Czech administrative system, staying between municipal self-governments and central authorities. They are involved in the provision of important public services – for instance those related to healthcare (regions are responsible for services of hospitals), education (particularly the secondary education), social welfare (regions are main coordinators of social services within their territories), environmental protection, services of some public utilities and road infrastructure (they are responsible for type I roads, and they also serve as coordinators of transport – they are responsible for integrated transport system within their territories). They have very important coordination roles in the Czech administrative system. A regional council (not a municipal council even in the case of largest cities) may submit proposals of new legislation to the Chamber of deputies which also enhance the potential of FB use for obtaining input from citizens. FB offers regions a potential channel for obtaining input from the areas of their responsibilities outlined above.

2. Use of social media in public administration: Literature review

Until now, various meta-analytic studies on social media use in public administration have been published. For instance, Skoric et al. (2016) concluded that studies published from 2007 to 2013 suggested that social media use generally had a positive relationship with engagement. The literature review made by Jukić (2017) indicates that social media usage in public administration has been most often investigated in the United States. Social media are usually researched within or with references to the Web 2.0 concept (e.g. Bonsón et al. 2012; Magro 2012; Reddick and Norris 2013; Hofmann et al. 2013; Ngai et al. 2015; Fredericks and Foth 2013, the latter with regards to specific activities – local planning processes in South East Queensland, Australia), emphasizing the potential of citizens to become active participants in creating, organizing, editing, combining, sharing, commenting and rating the content (Criado et al. 2013).

Various authors have highlighted the potential contribution of the internet to enhancing the interactivity, transparency and openness of public sector entities,

and Bonsón et al. (2012), for instance, emphasized that the potential of Web 2.0 was even bigger for enhancing transparency and citizen participation due to more possibilities offered for citizens to create content that may enrich socio-political debates. According to Reddick et al. (2017), Facebook use shows higher engagement levels of citizens with local governments, especially when they promote posts by citizens. The potential of social media use during disasters and crisis situation has also been emphasized and researched (e.g. Liu et al. 2016). Some authors have also researched other aspects – for instance, Tufts et al. (2015) examined how municipal and county governments in the US were using social media in recruiting, hiring, monitoring, and disciplining employees. Meijer and Torenvlied (2016) researched if social media de-bureaucratize the organization of government, concluding that in the case of the Dutch police departments, most twitter communication takes place through decentralized channels.

The adoption of social media by local governments in the United States was researched, for instance, by Reddick and Norris (2013), who concluded that social media did not appear to be moving local governments in the direction of Web 2.0, but perhaps in the direction of Web 1.5. They approached the topic mainly by working with factors associated with technology adoption and obtained data particularly through a questionnaire survey. They did not work with content from FB pages/profiles of local governments. Results of Avery and Graham (2013), Graham (2014) and Mahajan-Cusack (2016) indicate that social media are highly regarded as a beneficial communication tool for local government by public information officers or other civil servants of US local governments. Findings of Song and Lee (2015) or Porumbescu (2016) demonstrate that social media is an effective means for government to improve citizens' trust in government by enhancing their perceptions of government transparency. This confirmed earlier findings of Hong (2013), who concluded that the respondents' experience with social media had a positive effect on their trust in government at the local and state levels. Those respondents who interacted with the government through social media were more likely to trust state and local governments than those who did not. Tufts et al. (2015) summarized that many local governments in the US were not taking advantage of Facebook, Twitter, and other social media as potential tools for recruitment and screening because of concerns related to liability; the same organizations are conducting workplace monitoring and addressing disciplinary issues around employee social media use, often without guiding policies in place. Problems with strategic support of social media use has been indicated (e.g. Bennett and Manoharan 2017), this was done also with regards to smart cities (e.g. in Mexico – see Sandoval-Almazan et al. 2015).

Speaking of practices in developed EU member countries, Bonsón et al. (2012) investigated the potential contribution of social media to corporate transparency in municipalities. Their sample consisted of seventy-five local governments from the EU-15 countries. They selected bigger local governments, because they were

usually the most innovative in the adoption of new technologies, they had more need of greater disclosure and lower relative costs of the implementation of these new tools. Their analysis was done in two steps, the first focused on analyzing the official website of each local government (looking for 8 items). The second part of their research consisted of an analysis of social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Youtube, and Google blogs) focusing on the presence and activity of local governments through different indicators, such as the number of followers, number of conversations, number of groups. They concluded that most local governments were using social medial tools to enhance transparency, but, in general, the concept of corporate dialog and the use of Web 2.0 to promote e-participation were still in their infancy at the local level. Similarly, with regard to social media use by English local authorities, Ellison and Hardey (2013) concluded that their findings indicated that English local authorities did not engage with social media in any substantive manner, and this lack of attention to forms of communication afforded by Web 2.0 risked missing an important avenue of "citizen engagement".

Hofmann et al. (2013) presented their findings on the use of FB sites by the 25 largest German cities. They worked with a multi-method approach – first, they identified the properties and the topic of the initial posts published by the governments and used both inductive and deductive content analysis to categorize the properties and topics of the posts. They concluded that although local governments had begun to utilize new technology, the adoption was slow. Their analysis reflected that the online communication behaviour of German cities was based on disseminating information in a traditional way, without adapting their communication habits to the particular characteristics of social networking sites. Their research indicated a tendency for citizens to prefer topics related to leisure activities, but they emphasized that they could not evaluate typical FB communications behaviour, including appealing for co-designs, as governments made such little use of it.

In the following research, Bonsón et al. (2015) concluded that the most used media types were links and photos; cultural activities, sports and marketing related topics were most widely posted by Western European local governments, but these contents did not seem to be the most relevant for citizens according to them, because they only obtained low or moderate levels of engagement. Their research also indicated that most engaged citizens were found in Nordic and Southern European local governments, where citizens have almost twice as high engagement levels as in the Anglo-Saxon municipalities and almost three times higher than in the Germanic ones. According to their findings, the most commented topics dealt with the "environment" and "public works and town planning", while the most viral (most shared) topics are "public transport" and "attention to the citizen". They also pointed to the influence of the different topics on citizens' engagement, which also seems to be dependent upon the public administration style. Some similarities in findings can be found in an exploratory case study of a Swedish municipality's FB page, published by Magnusson et al. (2012), who concluded that while the municipality

uses its FB page primarily for marketing events, the public members display diverse usage, including requests for information or services, reports of service failure, and making complaints.

According to Bonsón et al. (2017) who analyzed data on FB use by 75 local governments from 15 countries, use of FB by local governments has become commonplace, the audiences of the official FB pages are rather high, but citizen engagement in general is low. Also, they concluded that activity levels by municipalities and engagement levels by citizens in general terms are not statistically related to municipality characteristics, FB page metrics, or the technological readiness of the populations. According to them, it seems that channel activity is more a decision on the part of local governments than a consequence of citizen demand. Also with regard to Australian local governments recent research has found that social media are used and valued more for the transmission of information and promotion than engaging in dialogue (Heaselgrave and Simmons 2016). This may be determined by the weight that is expressed by what is called "programmability" – the ability to disseminate information – this was indicated in findings of Olsson and Eriksson (2016), related to perceptions of representatives of Swedish government agencies. Olsson and Eriksson (2016) built their concept on a social media logic developed by Van Dijck and Poell (2013, in Olsson and Eriksson, 2016), and their findings indicate that programmability is more important than "connectivity" – social media communication is determined by the ability of public agencies to engage and attract –, or "popularity" – both external and internal demands to participate and be visible in social media. Other factors may be significant also. For instance, findings related to perceptions of local and regional Norwegian politicians recently published by Larsson and Skogerbø (2018) indicate that while services like Facebook and Twitter have gained considerable popularity among politicians, the bulk of respondents find traditional channels of communication more important. Local governments may also experiment with social media, using social media tools with no clear aim to interact with citizens (Khayri et al. 2014). Feeney and Welch (2016) discuss technology-task coupling and the fact that the implementation cost of social media technologies outweighs the managerial benefits they realize – that technology-task applications substitute for traditional approaches to the same task, but no effect is incurred (162). With regards to the South Korean context, Khan et al. (2014) found that both risks (i.e. social risk, time, psychological risks, and privacy concern) and benefits (i.e. social connectivity, social involvement, information attainment, and entertainment) significantly affect public sector employees' satisfaction with and intention to use social media. However, the effect of the benefits on users' satisfaction was stronger than the risks. Another reason why social media are used merely for the dissemination of information may be that local governments do not have capacities to work with data that can be obtained from social media. For instance, Moss et al. (2015) discuss the importance of social media analytics in local government.

Recently, Reddick et al. (2017) refocused their approach and they examined, through case study research (focused on the City of San Antonio Solid Waste Management Department), how a local government uses Facebook for e-participation and organizational learning from social media interactions with citizens. Their conclusion speaks about more promising directions for government's double-loop learning through social media platforms to enhance public service quality.

In the context of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries the topic of social media use, and mainly FB use, by public administration has emerged only recently (e.g. Urs 2016, Jukić and Merlak 2016). According to Urs (2017), social media use is sometimes considered part of the greater e-government movement, in which public institutions use new technologies for better government and social media sites are changing the way citizens are getting political information. Jukić and Merlak (2016) point out that public administrations have not been so eager to exploit the potential of social media and social networks for improving their service delivery, transparency and organizational image and also for more inclusive policy processes.

For instance, practices in Slovenia have been surveyed by Jukić and Merlak (2016), who presented findings on FB usage among 212 Slovene municipalities. Their findings show that almost half the municipalities surveyed established their FB presence, and on average Slovenian municipalities published 201 posts in 2015, representing 3.8 posts per week (although the number of posts varies greatly across the group of municipalities). Most of the Slovenian municipalities allowed users to write on their FB wall, but in the case of 21 % of municipalities, not even one followers' post was identified and also 18 % of municipalities did not try to engage followers to provide feedback in 2015. Urs (2016) published his findings on social media FB use of 48 Romanian city halls and concluded that almost half of the city halls published more than 100 posts in the period between 1 January 2014 and 30 March 2015 (i.e. within 454 days), and in general, the engagement rate was rather low within the sample surveyed. Sinkienė and Bryer (2016) presented their findings on social media adoption in 60 Lithuanian municipalities. Their research revealed that out of 60 municipalities, 46 (78 %) had an official FB account, approximately 41 % of them created their FB pages in 2015 or later. According to their data, although most municipalities published information on FB, they were not responding to the comments or other forms of feedback of the profile followers and therefore were not using the social elements of the social media for multi-way communication. They also argued that many municipalities (41 %) created their FB pages in 2015 because that was the year of local elections, and adopting FB might be based on political calculations of an individual running for office as mayor or another position. The presented findings are similar to recent findings of research on FB use by Western European municipalities, as outlined above.

3. Method and sample

Data were obtained on three groups of indicators through a combination of methods – a combination of a special software and manual web searches was done as outlined in Table 1 below. The set of indicators was inspired mainly by the methodology of Jukić and Merlak (2016), Sinkiene and Bryer (2016) and Urs (2016), but their method was slightly restructured and changed (especially regarding the types of posts).

Table 1

Indicators and methods

Indicators	How were the data obtained?
REGIONS – social media use, FB presence and use	
Availability of link to the FB page on the region's web pages	Manual search of a website of a region
Other social media tools used according to the region's web pages	Manual search of a website of a region
Existence of organization's Facebook profile/page	Manual search of a website of a region, FB search tool
Availability of link to the organization's web page on the FB page	Manual search of a website of a region
Possibility of users to Like/Comment Share	Manual search on FB profiles of regions
Year of entry on the Facebook network	Manual search on FB profiles of regions
Number of posts in 2015, 2016, 2017 (till 4 May)	Facepager
Number of shares in 2015, 2016, 2017	Facepager
Types of posts (only with regard to practices in 2016)	Manual categorization made by the author based on data on posts obtained through Facepager
Number of responses to citizens.	Facepager
Response rate	QUINTLY
Citizens / FB users	
Number of FB fans/likes/followers	Manual search on FB pages, QUINTLY
Number of posts requesting information, calling for cooperation/opinions in 2016	Manual search in data obtained through Facepager
Regions ↔ Users interactions	
Interaction rate	QUINTLY

The survey was carried out in May 2017. Facebook location data were obtained manually from official web pages of individual regions on 4 May. On the same day data on FB presence were registered in the prepared MS Excel sheet (availability of a link to the FB page on the region's web pages, other social media tools used ac-

cording to the web pages, existence of organization's FB profile/page, availability of link to the organization's web page on the FB page, type of presence, possibility of users to Like/Comment/Share and numbers of fans/likes/followers). Data on posts submitted in 2015 and 2016 were obtained on 5 May using Facepager (version 3.8; Keyling and Jünger 2017).

All Czech 13 regions, except Prague, were included in the survey.

4. Findings

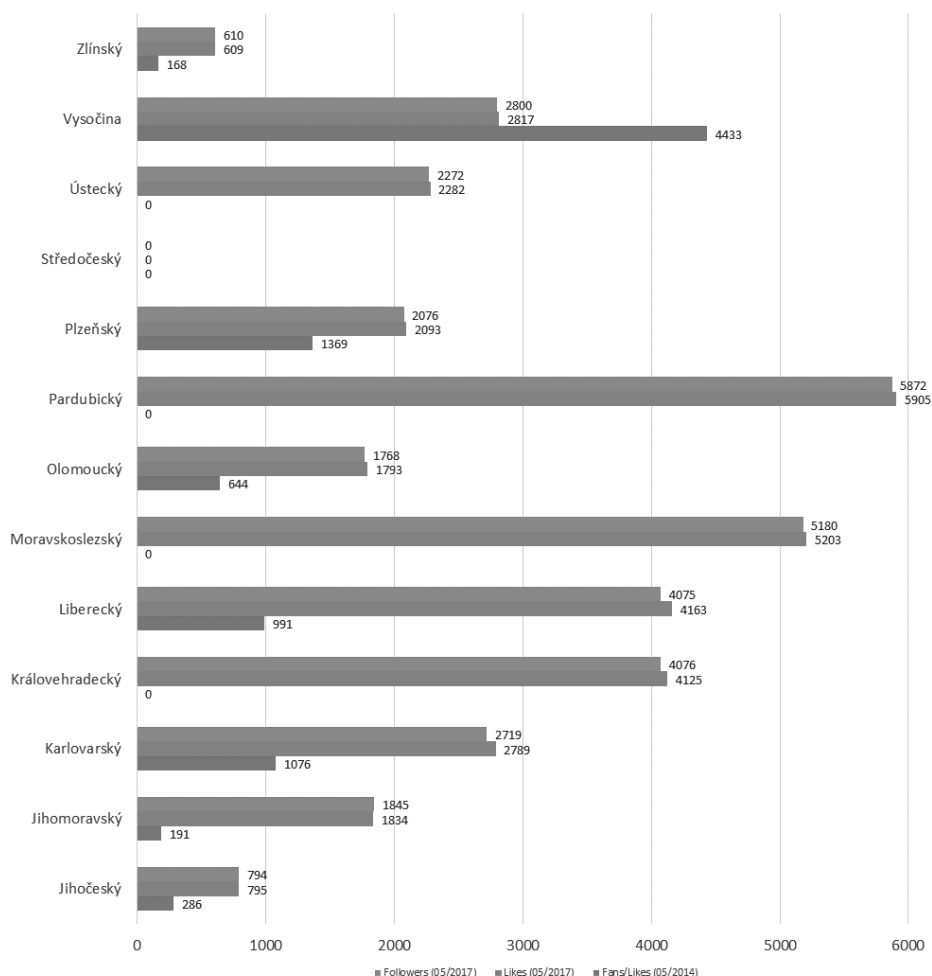### 4.1 FB presence of Czech regions and use of other social media

The survey revealed that the vast majority of regions had FB pages established in May 2017 (12 out of 13 surveyed, 92 %). All 8 regions (Jihočeský, Jihomoravský, Karlovarský, Liberecký, Olomoucký, Plzeňský, Vysočina and Zlínský) that used FB in 2014 (Špaček 2014) continued using it. In May 2017, 4 more regions were using FB – Pardubický, Ústecký, Moravskoslezský, and Královehradecký. Only one region – Středočeský – did not have its official FB profile/page in 2014 and still neither in 2017. All 12 regions that were using FB in May 2017 provided information about their FB location on their official web pages and informed about a link to their FB profile/page. They also did not restrict users and enabled Liking, Commenting and Sharing of their posts among FB users.

The mapping on information on official web pages of regions indicated that only 5 regions (38 %) were also using other social media. Usually they used a combination of more than one (Youtube + another one; 2 regions used Youtube + Twitter, one region Youtube + Instagram, another one Youtube + FlIcker + Google+, the last one only Youtube). Content published on platforms of these other social media was not surveyed.

4.2 Fans, likes and followers

Figure 1 shows the number of fans, likes and followers of the 12 Czech regions that were using FB in May 2017. Region Pardubický had the highest number of Fans in 2016, followed by the region Moravskoslezský and the region Královehradecký. All these regions did not have their FB page established in May 2014 and therefore had attracted users within a shorter time period.

Figure 1
Number of Fans/Likes/Followers

Zlínský	610 / 609 / 168
Vysočina	2800 / 2817 / 4433
Ústecký	2272 / 2282 / 0
Středočeský	0 / 0 / 0
Plzeňský	2076 / 2093 / 1369
Pardubický	5872 / 5905 / 0
Olomoucký	1768 / 1793 / 644
Moravskoslezský	5180 / 5203 / 0
Liberecký	4075 / 4163 / 991
Královehradecký	4076 / 4125 / 0
Karlovarský	2719 / 2789 / 1076
Jihomoravský	1845 / 1834 / 191
Jihočeský	794 / 795 / 286

■ Followers (05/2017) ■ Likes (05/2017) ■ Fans/Likes (05/2014)
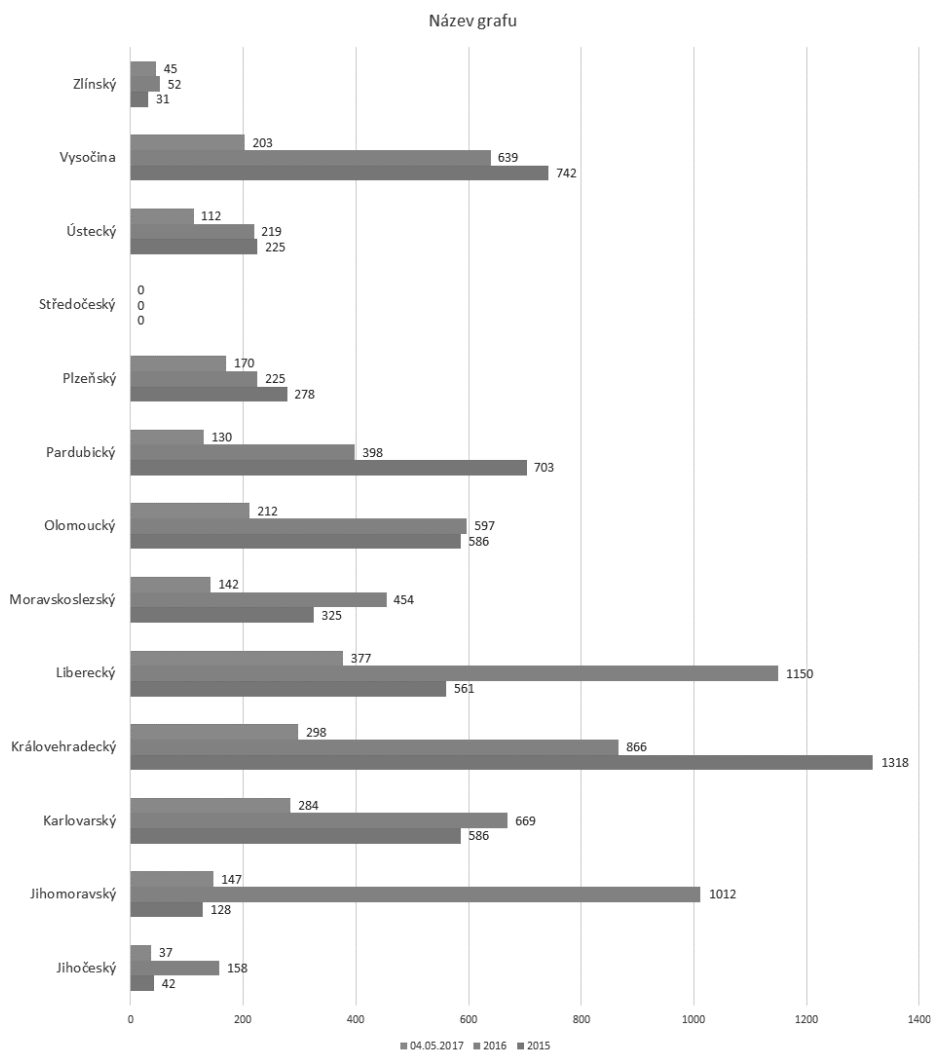
Source: (Author).

The data indicate that the number of fans and followers has been growing. Previous research indicated that the number of fans of FB pages of the Vysočina region was higher in 2015, but this was most probably caused by changes in the FB pages of Vysočina that occurred in the meantime. As indicated by Špaček (2014), in May 2014 it was not clear if the FB pages of the Vysočina region were the official ones and contrary to practices in May 2017 the messages that were published on FB pages in 2014 were rather unstructured and particularly of an advertisement type.

4.3 Posts on FB pages of Czech regions

Figure 2 shows the number of own posts of the 12 regions in the period 2015–5 May 2017. In 2016 Liberecký region was the most active region in terms of posts, but this region was not the most active one in 2015 (Královehradecký region was the first in this category in 2015).

Figure 2
Number of posts in 2015, 2016 and 2017 (as of 4 May)

Source: (Author).

As outlined above, 2016's own posts of regions were analyzed more in order to know more about the types (with regard to their content) of posts that were being published. During the manual analysis of posts it was found that we could differentiate the following types of posts published by the 12 Czech regions: calls for participation in political decision-making, submitting comments etc., and information on the region's budget, programmes and funds, changes in procedures/services, road construction/closing, migration, education policy, investments, preparation of studies for strategic plans, public tenders/procurement. The following Table 2 outlines the share of such posts on all own posts of regions and clearly shows that the vast majority of posts is represented by invitations to cultural or sport events and the like.

Table 2
Specific posts vs. invitations to cultural/sport events (situation in 2016)

Region	Share of specific posts in %	Share of posts like invitations to cultural / sport events in %
Jihočeský	4.43 %	95.57 %
Jihomoravský	5.58 %	94.42 %
Karlovarský	8.52 %	91.48 %
Královehradecký	4.97 %	95.03 %
Liberecký	6.70 %	93.30 %
Moravskoslezský	1.76 %	98.24 %
Olomoucký	2.35 %	97.65 %
Pardubický	2.01 %	97.99 %
Plzeňský	5.78 %	94.22 %
Středočeský	0.00 %	0.00 %
Ústecký	5.48 %	94.52 %
Vysočina	4.54 %	95.46 %
Zlínský	1.92 %	98.08 %

Source: (Author).

Figure 4 outlines what types of specific posts can be found among posts published by the 12 regions in 2016. It clearly shows that FB pages were used mainly for ex-post information rather than for calling for input from citizens ex ante. The survey clearly indicated that social elements of FB were not used by regions and that the FB pages were used mainly as a one-way communication channel.

Calls for participation could be found only sporadically among posts on the FB pages of Czech regions. This category of posts represents particularly calls for

participation in meetings of political decision-making bodies (regional councils), invitations to participate in elections to regional councils and also in meetings with the President of the region. The data on posts from 2016 also indicate that individual regions were not always consistent when calling for participation – e.g. a region may use FB in order to invite citizens to take part only in the case of some meetings of regional councils, not to take part in all meetings. The analysis of ex-post information also indicates that regions did not use FB in order to inform about proceedings of council meetings (and their location on web pages of regions etc.). In terms of total numbers of calls for participation, region Liberecký was the most active region.

In his findings from 2014, Špaček indicated that in case a region did not offer more inclusive e-participation tools on its web pages, its representatives sometimes reported that their region used other channels like FB to make e-discussion possible. This was explicitly stated in replies of representatives of 5 regions – Zlínský, Olomoucký, Jihočeský, Karlovarský and Plzeňský. Others often referred to the possibility for citizens to discuss via e-mail or to use other channels accessible thanks to contact data published on the web pages of their region. Also the relevancy of "Write to us"/"Write to a President" instruments were emphasized. In one case (PLZ) also the role of online and paper questionnaires was emphasized. Representatives of regions which use FB did not comment on any negative feature of this instrument and often emphasized that FB proved beneficial for obtaining valuable feedback. For example, the representative of Liberecký region (LIB) stated that "Thanks to FB we perceive what people are interested in much more than before. That is why we attempt to publish as little political information as possible on FB. We do not censor negative comments." The representative of Jihočeský region was of the opinion that "Due to the relatively short time of using our FB profile, its effect has not been evaluated. Nevertheless we may say that FB has proved to be a proper marketing instrument for promoting events of our region. At the same time it serves as a form of RSS channel and allows the public to watch our messages in a more efficient and comfortable way." The data indicate that the situation of calls for participation was similar in 2016, when again particularly the region Liberecký was the most active.

If we look at types of individual posts containing ex-ante calls/information, Figure 3 indicates a rather heterogeneous distribution across the group of the 12 regions. Some regions may publish only a certain type of specific information (which can be rather monothematic as was, for instance, the case of the region Ústecký), others – like the regions Liberecký, Karlovarský, or Královehradecký – may concentrate on a variety of topics (which may show a rather multi-thematic approach in the case of the specific information). For instance, in the case of the region Liberecký the focus of posts published by the region was on calls for participation and ex-ante information on changes in procedures/services and information on road reconstructions/closing. In the case of the region Karlovarský, the focus was on information on budget, programmes and funds and on investments. The regions

Plzeňský and Ústecký focused on information on changes in procedures and only the region Královehradecký used FB pages for informing more about its public tenders and education policy.

4.4 Overall rankings and comparison of FB usage by regions and largest cities

If we look at overall ranking, Table 3 indicates that the highest number of posts means the highest number of ex-ante calls for participation. Statistical analysis of data would reveal more correlations on this. But the question is if it is necessary for indicating patterns of FB usage for including citizens into the decision-making of regions. The analysis clearly indicates that regions use their FB pages mainly for ex-post informing and, similarly to Lithuanian municipalities (Sinkiene and Bryer 2016), they do not use the social elements of the social media for multi-way communication.
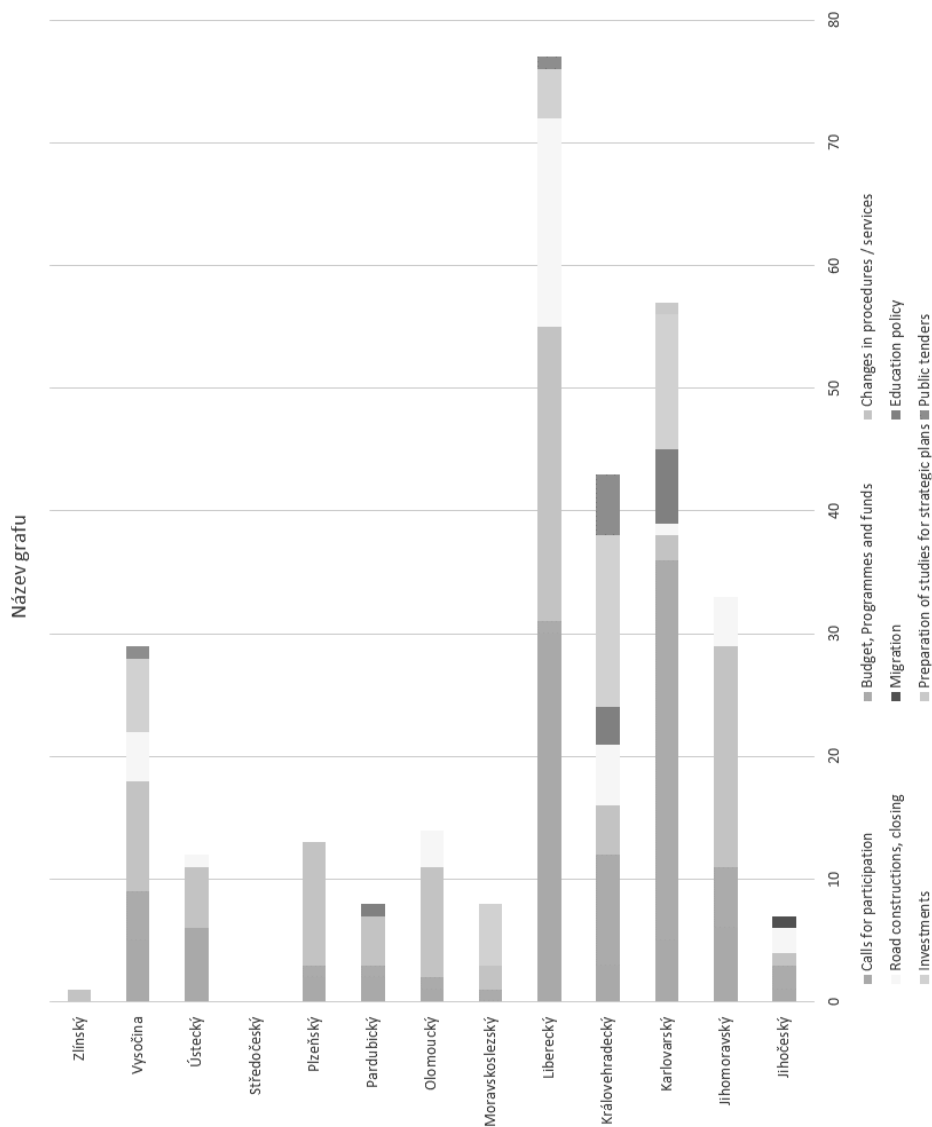
Table 3
Overall ranking

Own Posts (2016)		Calls for participation (2016, %)	
1. Liberecký	1150	1. Ústecký	2.74
2. Královehradecký	866	2. Liberecký	2.61
3. Karlovarský	669	3. Jihomoravský	1.02
4. Vysočina	639	4. Plzeňský	0.89
5. Olomoucký	597	5. Vysočina	0.78
6. Jihomoravský	591	6. Karlovarský	0.75
7. Moravskoslezský	454	7. Jihočeský	0.63
8. Pardubický	398	8. Pardubický	0.50
9. Plzeňský	225	9. Královehradecký	0.35
10. Ústecký	219	10. Olomoucký	0.17
11. Jihočeský	158	11. Moravskoslezský	0.00
12. Zlínský	52	12. Zlínský	0.00
13. Středočeský	0	13. Středočeský	0.00

Source: Author.

5. Concluding remarks

The paper presents the first results of research that focused in a more systematic way on the usage of Facebook (FB) by Czech regions. Looking at the figures on diffusion of social media sites and networks, FB has its potential for use in Czech

Figure 3
Types and share of specific posts on FB pages of regions (situation in 2016)

Source: (Author).

regional self-government. Regions can use FB pages for various purposes – not only for ex-post information, but also for obtaining citizens input for decision-making, feedback on proposals on regional legislation, policy etc.

The research revealed that the vast majority of regions had FB pages established in May 2017 (12 out of 13 surveyed, 92 %). All the regions that used FB in 2014 continue using it. Only one region (Středočeský) did not have its official FB profile/page and was not using FB actively. Only 5 regions (38 %) were also using other social media according to their web pages; usually a combination of more than one was in place.

In 2016 Liberecký region was the most active region in terms of posts, but this region was not the most active one in 2015. This calls for analysis of data on longer periods of time that can be followed up with interviews with people responsible for the content of the region's FB pages.

FB pages were used mainly for ex-post information by regions in Czechia. This is similar to findings on FB use that was summarized as using new tools in a traditional, rather than a more innovative way (see the findings of Hofmann et al. 2013 summarized above) – e.g. to the findings of Bonsón et al. (2015) (who concentrated on municipalities of Western European states), Gunawong (2015) and Roengtam et al. (2017) (who concentrated on Thailand or ASEAN cities), to observations in the US (as outlined above) as well as to researched practices in Australia (e.g. Khayiri et al. 2014). The most used types of posts were related to invitations to cultural activities and sports. Calls for participation can be found only sporadically within posts of regions. In terms of total numbers of calls for participation, region Liberecký was the most active region. The number of user posts and the interaction (engagement) rate and response rate were rather low in general, which indicates that the trend of FB use by Czech regions is similar to patterns of FB use by municipalities in other CEE countries that have been researched – Slovenia, Romania and Lithuania.

If we look at types of individual posts containing ex-ante calls/information, the survey indicates rather heterogeneous practices – FB pages can be used for publishing of ex-ante information only from some areas – e.g. changes in procedures/services, road reconstructions, budget and programmes and funds, investments.

As noted above, the paper does not deal with social uses of the FB pages of regions, a stakeholder perspective, neither is it focused on perceptions of social media of citizens, politicians or administrators. This may be subjected to further research in the future.

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