Michał Kuś

BOOK REVIEW:

**DOBEK-OSTROWSKA, BOGUSŁAWA & GARLICKI, JAN (EDS.)
POLITICAL COMMUNICATION IN THE ERA OF NEW
TECHNOLOGIES**

**Series: Studies in Communication and Politics – Volume 1, Peter Lang (2013),
Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien, 285 pages**

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The edited book entitled *Political Communication in the Era of New Technologies* is the first volume of a new series “Studies in Communication and Politics” initiated by Peter Lang Publishing. The series editors are Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska (University of Wrocław) and Michał Głowacki (University of Warsaw). This first volume has been edited by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Jan Garlicki (University of Warsaw).

The reviewed book consists of 15 chapters, selected by editors from submitted proposals, sent by authors from Europe, Africa, the United States, and Latin America. The publisher describes the book (on his website) as “a collection of socio-political studies”.

Indeed, the selected authors analyse a wide range of issues and phenomena related to the impact of new technologies – and especially new media (the Internet, mobile technologies) – on the process of political communication in early 21st century. They concentrate mainly on tendencies such as: the growing interactivity of communication, the evolution of social networking, the personalisation of media content and media consumption, social media development and their numerous consequences in terms of political campaigning, shaping political debate and public opinion, and building the political agenda. Some authors also describe more traditional channels of political communication and their “fate” in modern times.

This wide range of topics analysed by authors can be seen (in some contexts) as a weakness of this publication – but, on the other hand, it also illustrates how numerous and complex the effects of the mentioned technological changes for contemporary political communication in whole world are. Such approach also helps to avoid – frequently observed, also in political communication research – the westernisation of academic discourse on given issues.

The content of the book has been divided into four main parts, preceded by editor’s introduction.

The first group of chapters (Part 1: The Internet and Political Communication) and an article written by the editors (Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Jan Garlicki, *The Impact of New Technologies on Political Communication. Western Patterns and the Case of Poland*) includes theoretical contributions, referring to old and new models of political

communication. Barbara Pfetsch and Silke Adam (*Democratic Potentials of Online Communication for Political Debate*) analyse and assess the democratic potential of online communication for political debate in Western democracies. James Moir (*Mediating Politics in Scotland: Information and Ideology*) uses the example of Scotland and traditional and new media coverage of Scottish politics to explain the ideological context of media performance in the current media environment. Tendai Chari (*Online News Media and the Limits of the Alternative Public Sphere: the Case of Zimbabwe*) analyses the potential of new media for creating an alternative public sphere in a non-democratic country.

The second group of texts (Part 2: The Development of the Role of Social Media and its Influence on Political Communication) consists of those describing the changing environment of political communication processes, under the influence of technological changes, especially the rise of social media. This group of authors analyses the direct effects of technological changes on political communication (and partially also public communication) practices in given countries. David J. Jackson and Brian Collins (*Social Media, Entertainment and the Politics of Young People in the US*) analyse the political significance of social media and entertainment media for young Americans. German Espino Sanchez (*The Participation of Mexican Political Leaders in Web 2.0 in 2011*) evaluates new media activities of Mexican political leaders. Ewa Krz̄tała-Jaworska (*Municipalities Mastering Social Networks. But For What?*) tries to explain why the public authorities in France are relatively unsuccessful in implementing social media presence strategies. Jakub Nowak (*Political Communication, Social Media and Popular Culture The Adisucks Facebook Protest Case Study*) describes how social media creates a space of symbolic and participatory engagement in the collaborative creation and dissemination of grassroots political messages.

The third group of authors (Part 3: Election Campaigns in New Media) concentrates on the changing patterns of campaigning in the Digital Age. Jürgen Wilke (*Between Tradition and Innovation: Election Campaigns for the European Parliament in Germany (1999-2009)*) uses the example of Germany. Jan Garlicki and Daniel Mider (*The Use of New Media in Election Campaigns in Poland*) as well as Ilona Grzywińska (*Political Dialogue on Facebook – Myth or Reality? A Case Study of the Law and Justice and Civic Platform parties in Poland*) focus their research on the Polish political scene. Antonio Momoc (*Populist Candidates and Social Media Marketing during the 2009 Romanian Presidential Campaign*) adds interesting examples from Romania, analysing the first presidential election in Romania after EU accession.

The last group of authors (Part 4: Traditional Channels of Political Communication) analyses the role and evolution of the traditional tools of political communication in the new digital environment. Ewa Nowak (*The News Effect: Shifting Salience between Media and Policy Agenda*) discusses the role of traditional and new media in the process of evolution from the model in which the media agenda generally follows policy agenda towards a reverse model, in which the growing role of the media in making politics is underlined and clearly seen. Łukasz Wojciechowski, Peter Mikuláš, and Katarína Fichnová (*Billboards in Municipal Elections in Slovakia: Unexpected Contexts*) as well as Peter Szabo, Peter Mikuláš, and Lucia Spálová (*Comparative Media Discourse Analysis of a Selected*

Political Event in Slovakia) use examples from Slovakia to describe changing patterns in the use of traditional political communication tools on the relatively small political market.

Summarising: the reviewed publication enriches current discussions regarding the influence and role of digital media and new communication technologies on political communication, providing interesting theoretical contributions, as well as some case studies, supporting deeper understanding of contemporary evolution of political communication processes. This combination of theoretical contributions and case studies (with wide geographic scope – avoiding concentration on solely the Western world) is, without a doubt, “added value” of the publication. The presence of numerous authors coming from Central and East European countries can also be seen as sign of the dynamic development of high quality research on political communication in this region.