

POLITICAL POWER OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN KOSOVO

DREN GËRGURI\*

**Abstract.** *Media considered as the fourth power in a democratic country. In the era of digitalization, social media has an important place in the political and social processes. The article presents recent findings on the use of social media by political elites in Kosovo. The analysis centres around three research questions: (i) is the use of social media by politicians in Kosovo growing; (ii) does the social media have credibility in Kosovo; and (iii) are there cases that indicate political power for social media in Kosovo. The answers to these research questions are provided empirically, by using quantitative data obtained through a survey targeting political science and journalism students (530 respondents). Despite the fact that social media can be faster than traditional media, for many people, social media are not credible and they continue to believe only in traditional media. Therefore, the paper confronts those who always expect to be informed by traditional media and those who see new media as a credible replacement for traditional media.*

**Keywords:** *Internet, Kosovo, Politics, Social Media, Traditional Media.*

*Introduction*

The possibility of interactive discussions on a variety of issues and the creation of a network of uncensored news, are two of the innovations that social media have brought, through the use of internet, on computers, smart phones and tablets. Thus, they bring a new model of information, a new relationship between the public and reporters and a new stream of news, not from the top down, from the publisher/editor to the public, but from the bottom up, because, the story starts at the source and arrives to all interested. Another element of social media is fast, real time information. Twitter, Facebook, Google+, or blogs, can convey information to the public, sometimes even faster than traditional electronic media. There are a lot of studies about the impact of new media on society, and in particular about matchings or discrepancies between virtual and real support;

---

\* MA Teaching Assistant at the Department of Journalism, Faculty of Philology, University of Pristina "Hasan Prishtina", Kosovo; drenerguri@gmail.com

for example, political offer and so on. Different scholars view the new media as tools to trigger and initiate changes in society and governance in their respective countries.

Within this context, the research questions are:

1 – Is the use of social media by politicians in Kosovo growing?

2 – Does the social media have credibility in Kosovo?

3 – Are there cases that indicate political power for social media in Kosovo?

My work is built on different methodological principles. I've used the descriptive method primarily in the second part, and the analytical method in the third part of the paper; in the fourth, I combine these two methods. Comparative method is mainly used to compare different attitudes and opinions and, based on these comparisons, I draw certain conclusions.

The article is accompanied by relevant facts under review and submits more than one point of view on these issues, so that, beyond theory, is a more objective picture of the situation on the ground. With the support of casual methods, argued cause-consequence reports of structure were based upon primary sources as well as resources gained from the survey and any secondary sources issued by relevant scientific literature. I extract data from different respondents using surveys, which are conducted through a questionnaire.

The article is organized in four parts. The second part introduces a theoretical section which provides a conceptual framework for the social media. The third part tells more about the new stream news provided by new media. The fourth part is focused on the role of social media in politics and the credibility of social media, while the fifth part shows the use of social media by Kosovar political elite. The final results are presented in the sixth part of the article. Finally, the article provides a conclusion and gives some suggestions for further research.

### *What is Social Media?*

Social media is a new phenomenon which has changed the way politics operates. It is an electronic platform concept, where people can interact and have conversations about a wide variety of common issues, using computers and the Internet. In this sense, the Internet would meet the principles of the ideal public sphere of Habermas<sup>1</sup>, in which all citizens can come together in a social field of figurative accuracy to jointly cultivate public opinion. The Internet has not only affected the ways in which individuals communicate with each other, but also the participation of citizens in politics.

Social media includes new network information using interactive communication content-user-producer. "Some studies argue that "participatory web", a term used to suggest potential offered by Web 2.0 collaboration and content generation by users themselves, is encouraging citizen involvement in the political process"<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991.

<sup>2</sup> Michele Zappavigna, *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media: How we use language to create affiliation on the web*. London, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012, p. 170.

Professors Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content”<sup>3</sup>. Ballein in his book “Media and Societies” says: “Web 2.0 is not a concept but a slogan”<sup>4</sup>. He only sees Web 2.0 as the shift from Web 1.0, saying that the internet user turns from passive to active in the new Web. The term Web 2.0 was coined by American consultant, Tim O’Reilly in 2005. In table 1, we can see the evolution from Web 1.0 to 2.0.

Table 1

Evolution from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

Web 1.0		Web 2.0
DoubleClick	→	Google AdSense
Ofoto	→	Flickr
Akamai	→	BitTorrent
mp3.com	→	Napster
Britannica Online	→	Wikipedia
personal websites	→	blogging
Evite	→	upcoming.org and EVDB
domain name speculation	→	search engine optimization
page views	→	cost per click
screen scraping	→	web services
Publishing	→	Participation
content management systems	→	Wikis
directories (taxonomy)	→	tagging (“folksonomy”)
Stickiness	→	Syndication

Source: Image courtesy of O’Reilly Media, <http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>

The first generation of the Web, or Web 1.0, was an environment where users generally consumed what was offered. Meanwhile, Web 2.0 enables users to collaborate and share.

Eight basic forms of social media are shown in the following table.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas Kaplan, Michael Haenlein, *Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media*, Business Horizons, Vol. 53 (1), 2010, p. 61.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Balle, *Mediatdheshoqëritë. Botimi i 15-të*, Tirana, Papirus, 2011, p. 241.

*Table 2*  
Eight basic forms of social media

Social Networks	Facebook, Google+, Myspace, LinkedIn
Content communities	YouTube, Flickr, Slideshare
Blogs	Wordpress, Bloggerblogs
Microblogging	Social networks combined with blogs, Tumblr
Wikis	Wikipedia, Wikispaces
Podcasts	Documents in audio and video, Apple iTunes
Virtual Community	Habbo Hotel, Second Life
Forums	Area for online discussions about different topics

*Source:* Author's own compilation

Various forms of social media are experiencing rapid development. Every day new tools emerge, as well as the new functions and services for these tools.

#### *New stream of news*

The political power of social media is that they create a stream of news that is not possible to censor, such as the case of revolutions in the Middle East, where without the social media, the news would have been censored by the government. Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, talking about "the role that technology can play in promoting democracy around the world", is convinced that "the expansion of access to information can be a powerful force for change, if it increases transparency"<sup>5</sup>.

Technologies and web-based media have allowed participation in a new type of public sphere which can be difficult to control by the state. "The advent of social media has opened up new ways for people with similar interests to find, share and talk about news – including news about politics – with friends and colleagues"<sup>6</sup>. The Internet is evolving and there is still much to discover about its impact on society, although some effects can already be distinguished, among which is also a revolution in news flow. In traditional media (newspapers, radio, TV), decisions are made by publishers/editors and news flow goes from the top

<sup>5</sup> The Aspen Institute, *Media and Democracy, A Report of the 2008 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society*, Washington D.C, 2009, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell et al., *Political Polarization & Media Habits. From Fox News to Facebook, How Liberals and Conservatives Keep Up with Politics*. Pew Research Center, 2014, p. 25.

down, but thanks to social media, it may be that the story moves from the source to arrive to all concerned. So, social media has brought a new model for news/information in the media world.

Marissa Mayer, president of Yahoo, thinks that technology has changed the way of news consumption. While the traditional way of news consumption has been the newspaper or the evening news program on TV, now the individual item has taken primacy and, according to Mayer, Google itself has contributed to this change by offering Google News, which provides an overview of news events worldwide, continuously updated (or refreshed)<sup>7</sup>. Today, in most Western countries and the US, social media has become a very important source for news and a source that is used every time, more and more. In a study in the US, Pew Research Center “finds that a clear majorities of Twitter (63%) and Facebook users (63%) now say each platform serves as a source for news about events and issues outside the realm of friends and family”<sup>8</sup>.

For Philip Bennett, Head Editor/Managing Editor of “Washington Post”, the new media are playing an important role in verifying received news from traditional media<sup>9</sup>. Like never before – says Italian scholar of new media, Riccardo Stagliano<sup>10</sup> – the network has revealed many tricks of the profession: “... resources can be reviewed directly by the public. Reader no longer accepts the news as a ‘package’ prepared by the editors and journalists of traditional media, and through new media, he/she has the option of selecting which news he/she wants to read, and neglect the others.” “Based on the rapid development of Web 2.0 technologies and associated social media, internet users are enabled to create content on their own. By using political blogs or discussion forums people express their opinions, participate in discussions or find politically like-minded individuals”<sup>11</sup>.

As scholar Stephan Russ-Mohl says, “... the users can choose the rebus stones themselves and decide how to put them in the overall picture”<sup>12</sup>. It seems that gone are the times when freedom of the press, according to the expression of one of the founders of the ‘Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung’, Paul Sethe, meant ‘freedom of 200 rich people to spread their views’. On the Internet today, anyone can write for a worldwide audience and with low cost<sup>13</sup>. Figure 8 shows the difference between traditional media and new media. These differences have prompted the owners of traditional media to focus on new media, because through them they can provide various services, such as personalization pages.

<sup>7</sup> The Aspen Institute, *Media and Democracy, A Report of the 2008 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society*. Washington D.C, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Barthel et al., *The Evolving Role of News on Twitter and Facebook*, Pew Research Center, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> The Aspen Institute, *Media and Democracy, A Report of the 2008 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society*. Washington D.C, 2009, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Riccardo Stagliano, *Gazetaria 2.0 – Tëmerresh me informacionëkohën e internetit*, Instituti Shqiptar i Medias, 2004, p.116.

<sup>11</sup> Stefan Stieglitz, Tobias Brockmann, Linh Dang-Xuan, *Usage Of Social Media For Political Communication*. PACIS 2012 Proceedings. Paper 22, 2012, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Stephan Russ-Mohl, *Gazetaria. K&B*, 2010, p. 132.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 30.

*Table 3*  
Comparison of traditional media with new media

	Mass Media	Personal media
Dominant Medium	TV	The Web
Location	Living Room	Everywhere
Experience	Watch Consume	Participate Create
Players	Few and large	Many and small
Business models	Product/Service	Subscription(and more)

*Source:* Paul Saffo, Farewell Information, it's a Media Age, [http://saffo.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/essay\\_farewellinfo.pdf](http://saffo.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/essay_farewellinfo.pdf)

Today there are various methods, offered by news websites, to customize the site. For example, MSNBC.com requires visitors to show their zip code in order to open the page with news related to that geographical area. This becomes a kind of personalization of news, based on the geographic region where the visitor lives.

The acceleration of communication development has increased communication quality in general, but also created significantly widespread communication problems. Revolutions in transportation and traffic, led by the Internet, have brought the public opinion factor to a key position, now more than ever. Media has become an effective actor, mediating between domestic and foreign policies that were never completely independent from each other.

#### *Role of social media in politics and credibility*

Today, Twitter can be considered CNN's social media. NBC journalist Ann Curry is one of the supporters of the idea that social media are beyond media like CNN or BBC. "I learned on Twitter about the recent missile test in North Korea. I looked at the TV and there was no reporting on this issue ... I went on Twitter and reported the facts as I found them in real time"<sup>14</sup>. "Major events are well covered by traditional medi, although disasters will often be reported first through social media"<sup>15</sup>; this is one of the key findings in an independent research report sponsored by iSentia. Nevertheless, "there are people who believe that the traditional media have high levels of credibility. Despite the growth of new media, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, the world still expects a lot from the old global media like CNN and BBC"<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Solis, *Is Twitter the CNN of the new media generation?*, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Jim Mcnamara, *Which media set the news agenda: Mass media or/and social media?*, iSentia, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Pete Cashmore, *CNN fail: Twitter blasts CNN over Iran election*, 2009.

American researcher Murray Newlands sees five ways in which social media manifests its influence in politics.

- Polls: “When a politician is speaking or a debate is going on, Twitter has increasingly been one of the best ways to take a quick and easy gauge of the reaction of the general public”<sup>17</sup>. Besides Twitter, Facebook is also often used for such a purpose, because, both of them offer inexpensive and widespread ways for the realization of polls.

Commentary: “News outlets routinely report on what this or that politician said on their Twitter or Facebook account”<sup>18</sup>. For example, in January 2012, a Facebook comment about the Vetevendosje protests, made by a Kosovo government official, became news.

- Announcements: Former Chairman of the Assembly of Kosovo, Jakup Krasniqi used Facebook in 2015 to announce his withdrawal from the post of deputy in the Assembly.

- Scandal: “Anthony Weiner’s growing Twitter follower account could have been an example in and of itself of the growing political influence of social media, but the recent scandal is an example of just how big the waves of social media can be if it has a tinge of scandal.”<sup>19</sup> Weiner’s scandal, also known as Weingate, began when the US Congressman used Twitter to send a message with a sexually suggestive picture to a 21-year-old girl from a college in Washington. This scandal has resulted in Weiner’s resignation on June 16, 2011.

- Being In Touch: “Remember how current US President Obama won the election partly because he was connected to younger voters over social media?”<sup>20</sup>

American columnist Mary Kate Cary<sup>21</sup>, in her article titled “5 Ways New Media Are Changing Politics” published on the website of US News World Report, presents five ways in which new media changes politics: News you Can Choose, Share it, Like it, Connect with others and Donate Now. These 5 points really show how far they have achieved methods of information thanks to the new media and how these forms are used by politicians to communicate directly with the public. Characteristic of these media is that the information in them is unloaded and presented as is, therefore censorship of information is almost impossible. The successful use of social media by Barack Obama’s presidential campaign in the United States has influenced social media, like Twitter, Facebook, Myspace, etc., to become important tools in political campaigns.

“Recently, social media such as social network sites (SNS), weblogs, microblogging, and wikis play an increasingly important role in shaping political communication in the US and around the world”<sup>22</sup>. There have been a number of studies about the political influence of social media during election campaigns, and the most frequently mentioned case is that of the presidential elections of the

<sup>17</sup> Murray Newlands, *Top 5 ways social media influences politics*, 2011.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Kate Cary, *5 ways in which new media change politics*, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Stefan Stieglitz, Linh Dang-Xuan, *Social media and political communication: a social media analytics framework. Social Network Analysis and Mining*, December 2013, Volume 3, Issue 4, pp. 1277-1291, 2013, p. 1279.

United States, in 2008. Another example is Twitter's inclusion in the German federal elections in 2009. Some scholars from the Technical University of Munich analysed more than 100,000 messages, which were referring to parties or politicians before the German federal election of 2009. The main finding of this study was the connection between the numbers of tweets and voter preferences. It found that the number of tweets had approached traditional election polls, while political messages on Twitter closely corresponded to the views of the electorate and were reliable indicators of media coverage during the campaign<sup>23</sup>.

In a study made by the Reuters Institute in 2012, we see that in the United States and the UK, people use online media in order to get information, while Germany is one of those few states that have stayed loyal to traditional media<sup>24</sup>.

Various scholars (Castells, Gerbaudo, Shirky, Gladwell, and Morozov) raise the issue of the impact of social media, for better or for worse. According to them, each person using social media can provide or may publish content, and this content is neither filtered nor submitted to procedures that are common in the media, such as the double or triple verification; therefore it can often be groundless, false, slanderous, or unintentional – sometimes becoming downright harmful.

In an article published in "Foreign Affairs", American professor Clay Shirky (2011) talks about scepticism towards social media, bringing two arguments against the idea that social media will make changes in national policies possible. The first is that these tools are themselves ineffective, and the second is that they produce as much harm to democratization as good, because repressive governments are becoming better at using these tools to suppress dissent<sup>25</sup>.

Therefore it is important even in Kosovo to take into account this side of the debate about the potential of social media to influence or to bring about political and social change.

Criticism of ineffective social media is scrutinized by Malcolm Gladwell in 'The New Yorker'. According to Gladwell, this stems from the fact that "casual participants of such activities and actions, such as social protest, seek social change through low-cost activities, by joining a particular group on Facebook, such as "Save Darfur"<sup>26</sup>. Gladwell believes that such actions cannot bring any useful reaction. Shirky, however, says that, although this critique is correct, it is not central to the issue of the power of social media, in the sense that actors, who are dedicated and who join Facebook groups and make comments online, are not necessarily very committed to the causes they advocate, and cannot really use social media in order to influence political and social changes. Shirky mentions the 2009 protests in India, those of 2008 in South Korea and the 2006 protests in Chile. In all three cases, the organizers have not used social media as a substitute for real life, but as a way to better coordinate their activity.

<sup>23</sup> Tumasjan et al., *Predicting Elections with Twitter: What 140 Characters Reveal about Political Sentiment*. The Fourth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media, 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Nic Newman, Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: *Tracking the future of News*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2012, p. 24.

<sup>25</sup> Clay Shirky, "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere and Political Change", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90 (1), 2011, pp. 28-41.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

The second critique – that social media tools can be used to influence or bring about political changes, social and political improvement – has to do with the fact that the state is becoming more sophisticated and technologically advanced in terms of monitoring and banning social media tools<sup>27</sup>.

It is therefore necessary to point out that social media tools can be used as tools of state repression. However, the success of social networks in support of the “Arab Spring” in Tunisia and Egypt cannot be denied. With regard to Kosovo, a country experiencing a period of great changes, there is no doubt that social media will play an important role in providing active political participation. Today, we have political party leaders who use Facebook or Twitter to express their opinion about particular contexts. For example, after the signing of the SAA between Kosovo and the European Union, politicians from different parties used Facebook in order to express their satisfaction for this achievement. Another example is the reaction of opposition leaders to statements issued by the heads of state.

#### *The use of social media by Kosovo’s political elite*

The use of social media by the political elite is increasing in Kosovo. “The continued engagement of social media by citizens means that political power and influence, especially insofar as citizens are concerned, will spread to platforms that feature integrated social roles, all of which can be entirely visible to political actors”<sup>28</sup>. If we look at the general election of 2012, we see that the political parties and candidates from the ranks of the parties all used social media in order to get closer to their supporters and to communicate with them. This way of communication increased for the general election of 2014. In those elections, most political parties devoted great attention to social media, like Facebook and YouTube, during the election campaign. From visits across Kosovo, most political parties published videos on YouTube, and some even on Facebook, as social media is viewed as the most efficient tool for influencing the masses, so they tried to convey more messages on Facebook. For images that could not find broadcast space on television, some of our political parties used social media, Facebook and YouTube, in order to have them published. This is an example of how the powerful new tools of Internet such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook are changing the way that media products are produced, distributed and consumed.

Such examples can be found in different countries of the world. For instance, in Italy, during the general elections of 2013, political activist Beppe Grillo, was focused upon the new media, using blogs and YouTube unlike other politicians. In October 2005, Grillo launched a personal blog, Beppegrillo.it, which soon spread to Italy and beyond. Finally, Beppegrillo.it was ranked by The Guardian<sup>29</sup>, among the ten most visited and most influential blogs. The phenomenon of Grillo’s blog

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel Trotter & Christian Fuchs, *Theorising Social Media, Politics and the State – An Introduction*. In Daniel Trotter & Christian Fuchs (eds.), *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup> *The Guardian*, The world’s 50 most powerful blogs, 2009.

increased the power of the Internet as a source of uncensored information and a place for free discussion. Later Grillo decided to open a channel on YouTube, “La Cosa”, and used it to spread his political propaganda and to counter political rivals. This proved successful because Grillo’s party came third in the elections of 24 and 25 February, 2013. Grillo said that his party, MoVimento, “has feet on the ground, but its head on the web”<sup>30</sup>.

In a study of the Reuters Institute for Journalism, *The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism*, BBC reporter Nic Newman (2009) mentions six features of the modification of the picture media with the ‘deluge’ of social media.

- In recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of participants in social networks, as determined by the use of Internet.
- Social media and UGC (user generated content) are fundamentally changing the nature of breaking news.
- Journalists have begun to visit more and more often social media like Twitter, blogs and Facebook.
- Social media, blogs and UGC are not replacing journalism, but they are “creating a new layer of information and diverse opinion”. People are generally satisfied with information gathered from traditional media (TV, radio, newspapers), but every day more and more people are lured by social media.
- “Historically, participation in mainstream sites has focused on self-standing message boards and blogs.”
- Social Recommendations have begun to play an important role in increased attention to traditional news content<sup>31</sup>.

Newman notes that, over time, social media can be just as important as the Web search engines.

Today, almost all politicians in Kosovo use Facebook, not only for social purposes, but also for sending political messages, while Twitter and Google+ are less prevalent in our country. “In 2014, Twiplomacy ranked the former foreign minister of Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj, among the top 25 world leaders most active on Twitter. Politicians also frequently use Facebook to communicate with the media and public”<sup>32</sup>.

Being present on the Internet can be a benefit for political parties and in a study, Gibson and Ward “identify three main lines of research in the field: first, the intra-party arena, referring to the use of the Internet by political parties to facilitate communication amongst its members; second, the inter-party arena, referring to how political parties use the Internet to compete with each other in campaigning; and third, the systemic-arena, referring to how political parties reorganise themselves so as to seize the new opportunities offered by the Internet”<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>30</sup> *The Economist*, Beppe Grillo Five-star menu, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Nic Newman, *The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2009, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> IREX, Europe & Eurasia Media Sustainability Index 2015. Kosovo MSI Chapter, 2015, p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> Andrea Calderaro, “Internet Politics Beyond the Digital Divide – A Comparative Perspective on Political Parties Online Across Political Systems,” in Păruș Bogdan & Pătruț Monica (eds.), *Social Media in Politics, Public Administration and Information Technology* 13, Switzerland, Springer, 2014, p. 3.

If we look at the fan rankings that Kosovo's politicians have on their Facebook<sup>34</sup> pages then former Prime Minister, now the current Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, leads with 269,399 admirers. He is followed by President Atifete Jahjaga with 116,547 fans and Prime Minister Isa Mustafa with 86,280 likes.

As shown in Table 4, a major step was made by Kosovo's political elite after 2013, in order to be present on social media. Politicians began to use social media more and more often in the past two years.

*Table 4*

Politicians fans rankings – Top 3

	2015	2014	2013
HashimThaçi	269,399	270,055	1,628
Atifete Jahjaga	116, 547	101,161	1,568
Isa Mustafa	86,280	87,597	2,437

*Source:* Facebook

*Table 5*

Political parties fans rankings – Top 3

	2015	2014	2013
VV	199, 181	199,821	162,272
PDK	25,806	26,380	15,776
NISMA	13,642	14,005	-

*Source:* Facebook

Regarding parties, 'Lëvizja Vetëvendosje' is undoubtedly the most active on Facebook. In its official profile has it has 199,181 admirers. It is followed by PDK with 25,806 fans. A new political party, Nisma, has 13,642 likes, AAK has 11,232 likes while LDK has 10,102.

"The Internet has truly become a new civic arena, but not all citizens are equally present in this venue. Those who pay attention to politics or government on the

<sup>34</sup> Data from Facebook, accessed 15.10.2015.

internet tend to be the young...”<sup>35</sup>, and therefore, if we compare the online support for political parties with the last election results then we can conclude that there is a discrepancy between them, and reliance on the Internet is not necessarily transforming the field. However, the proliferation of new media in Kosovo continues to be much smaller compared to Albania or the Western countries, but almost at the same level in comparison with other regional countries. In Albania, Prime Minister Edi Rama has almost one million likes on his official Facebook page, while the opposition leader, Lulzim Basha, has more than five thousands admirers.

President Obama conducted the first virtual interview from the White House on January 30, 2012. “Over 227,000 people submitted questions, while the president spoke with five Americans from across the country. Google and YouTube selected questions for Obama from the videos that got the most votes from YouTube users”<sup>36</sup>. President Obama has transformed this mode of communication into a tradition, as he continued virtual interviews with citizens in subsequent years, on February 14, 2013 and January 31, 2014.

Today, in Kosovo, members of political parties use social media for any kind of information. However, social media is not yet used for interviews with citizens. From across the political spectrum of Kosovo, primarily members of the ‘Lëvizja Vetëvendosje’, and the former Prime Minister of Kosovo, Thaçi, use social media during the organization of their activities. Following the example of the American President Obama and in order to similarly use new media, former Prime Minister Thaçi has communicated with citizens through Facebook and YouTube. Citizens are directed to the former Prime Minister’s official Facebook page and to the column “Shkruaj Thaçit”, while current Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Thaçi respond to citizens by posting videos on a YouTube channel.

Likewise, during the protests organized by the ‘Lëvizja Vetëvendosje’, on 14 and 22 January 2013 at the two crossing points in Merdar and Dheu i Bardhë, social media were used to support and entice people to come and join the protest. ‘Lëvizja Vetëvendosje’ used Facebook to summon citizens to join in the protest. For the campaign “Duajetënden”, which aims to promote domestic products, the initiator of this campaign, ‘Lëvizja Vetëvendosje’, again used social media in order to spread information and to strengthen its voice. More than 16 thousand people joined the Facebook page supporting this campaign. Another Facebook initiative was used for protests against management in the Electro-Energetic Corporation of Kosovo and against the increased price of power bills.

Such examples can be taken from other countries too, such as the protests in Egypt. Facebook and Twitter created opportunities for political expression against corruption in the Egyptian government. Calls for political and social change that took place in the streets of Cairo won a very large impact on the entire globe, gaining the support of many people from around the world. So, here we can see that political power can gain social media, when used as a means of communication/information.

<sup>35</sup> Karden Mossberger, Toward digital citizenship – Addressing inequality in the information age. In Andrew Chadwick & Philip N. Howard (eds.) *Handbook of Internet Politics*, New York, Routledge, 2009, p. 175.

<sup>36</sup> Alex Fitzpatrick, *President Obama’s First Google+ Hangout: How’d He Do?*, 2012.

### *Survey results*

The general conclusion of our survey is that the people of Kosovo don't select the Internet as a first choice source of information, but the use of the Internet is growing; and with that, also the political and social power of social media. Today, 93% of respondents choose the internet for information on political topics, over the radio (table 6). Television is the most followed medium in Kosovo, and this gives it great power to influence the lives of the citizens of Kosovo, and particularly their political choices. Television is considered an irreplaceable partner in the promotion of ideas, platforms or campaigns that affect the sensitivity of the public opinion. The survey also finds that those who use the new media/internet for obtaining news about politics often are simultaneously getting the same news through other channels.

*Table 6*

Which media you use for information on political topics?  
(More than one answers possible)

	n=	(%)
TV	490	98
Radio	460	92
Newspaper	475	95
Internet	465	93

*Source:* Own analysis

In Kosovo, the Internet is being used more and more every day, and the social media are using it for information. Websites are also using it for information, more than social networks. This can also be because websites have integrated social media and are more organized and able to convey new information to the public.

*Table 7*

Which of the new media you use for information?  
(More than one answers possible)

	n=	(%)
Web sites	500	100
Facebook	405	81
Twitter	285	57

*Source:* Own analysis

In Kosovo, because of the economic situation of the country, it is difficult to influence politics, and therefore, the respondents believe that social media does not have any power of influence. Only 24 % of respondents claimed a belief that social media can have an influence in politics (table 8), while 73 % responded that social media cannot influence politics.

According to the survey's results, the first of four models of setting the political agenda, the top-down model<sup>37</sup> dominates in Kosovo. According to this model, political actors are the main factor. They influence society with their attitudes and decisions, while the media are dependent on them. Therefore, we may conclude that our media instrumentation of political actors is omnipresent.

Table 8

Do you believe that new media can influence in politics?

	n=	(%)
Yes	120	24
No	365	73
I do not know	15	73

Source: Own analysis

By referring to the answers of the respondents, television is the most trusted medium in Kosovo. The low percentage of those that trust in Internet information's (62 %) and those believing that the traditional media are more to be trusted (97 % TV, 94 % newspaper, 88 % radio) makes us conclude that social media is still considered not to be a reliable source for political information (table 9). This can also be because in the social media, everyone can provide or publish content, and this content is neither filtered, nor subjected to procedures that are common in the traditional media, such as double or triple verification; but can often be unfounded, with intentional or unintentional defamations, and as such can become harmful.

Table 9

Which source information do you trust more?  
(More than one answers possible)

	n=	(%)
TV	485	97
Radio	440	88
Newspaper	470	94
Internet	310	62

Source: Own analysis

<sup>37</sup> Ulrich von Alemmann, Das Parteiensystem der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH 2010, p. 143.

Table 10 reveals that, in Kosovo, politicians are being followed on social networks by a majority of respondents (64%). In recent years, use of social media by politicians has increased. Politicians are using social networks in order to communicate with citizens, and this has also led to an increase in the number of citizens interested to follow them on social networks. This is also a result of the new age proportion that prevails amongst the people of Kosovo, as young people tend to use social networks more than older people.

*Table 10*

How much you follow the politicians on social networks?

	n=	(%)
A lot	320	64
A little	170	34
Not at all	10	02

*Source:* Own analysis

### *Conclusion*

We can conclude that the political empowerment of social media is growing.

Specifically, whereas before candidates for the presidency of the United States have announced their candidacy through print media (newspapers), and later through electronic media (radio and television), today they make it through social media (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Google+). This upward trend is coming to Kosovo also. The political elite of the country is increasingly paying more attention to these new media.

Another element that makes social media more important is the possibility of informing the public quickly and in real time; because today the individual can be notified in real time, not only on TV and radio, but also in the social media, on Twitter, Facebook, Google+, or on any blog. Even social media can convey information to the public, sometimes faster than the traditional media. But in Kosovo traditional media continues to be more credible than new media/social media.

Many scholars (Paolo Gerbaudo, Manuel Castells, Clay Shirky) refer to several countries and regions of the world, where social media have been used in the past ten years to trigger and initiate changes in the governments and societies of these countries. These are examples of the positive impact of social media upon such events. If we make an analysis of events in Kosovo in recent years, it is clear that social media are gaining an important role on the political scene.

However, in Kosovo, the new media phenomenon is still spreading, and has not managed to become an important part of the media landscape. We have the case of 'Lëvizja Vetëvendosje' to study; in its arrangements, it gathered great support on Facebook and other social networks; however this does not transform its activity on the ground.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Balle, Francis, *Mediatdheshoqëritë. Botimi i 15-të*, Tirana, Papirus, 2011;
- Barthel, Michael. Shearer, Elisa. Gottfried, Jeffrey. Mitchell, Amy, *The Evolving Role of News on Twitter and Facebook*, Pew Research Center, <http://www.journalism.org/2015/07/14/the-evolving-role-of-news-on-twitter-and-facebook/>Calderaro, Andrea, "Internet Politics Beyond the Digital Divide – A Comparative Perspective on Political Parties Online Across Political Systems," in Pătru? Bogdan&Pătru? Monica (eds.), *Social Media in Politics*, Public Administration and Information Technology 13, Switzerland, Springer, 2014;
- Cary, Mary Kate, *5 ways in which new media are changing politics*, <http://www.usnews.com/opinion/slideshows/5-ways-new-media-are-changing-politics>, 2010;
- Cashmore, Pete, *CNN fail: Twitter blasts CNN over Iran election*.<http://mashable.com/2009/06/14/cnnfail>, 2009;
- Fitzpatrick, Alex, *President Obama's First Google+ Hangout: How'd He Do?* <http://mashable.com/2012/01/31/obama-hangout/>, 2012;
- Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Cambridge, Massachusett, The MIT Press, 1991;
- IREX. Europe & Eurasia Media Sustainability Index 2015.Kosovo MSI Chapter.[https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE\\_MSI\\_2015\\_Kosovo.pdf](https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/u105/EE_MSI_2015_Kosovo.pdf), 2015;
- Kaplan, Andreas, Haenlein Michael, "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," *Business Horizons*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 59-68, 2010;
- Mcnamara, Jim, *Which media set the news agenda: Mass media or/and social media? An independent research report*, iSentia,[http://www.isentia.com/assets/blog/special/isentia\\_whitepaper\\_layout\\_international\\_d1.pdf](http://www.isentia.com/assets/blog/special/isentia_whitepaper_layout_international_d1.pdf), 2014;
- Mitchell, Amy, Gottfried, Jeffrey, Kiley, Jocelyn, Matsa, Katerina Eva, *Political Polarization & Media Habits. From Fox News to Facebook, How Liberals and Conservatives Keep Up with Politics*, Pew Research Center. <http://www.journalism.org/files/2014/10/Political-Polarization-and-Media-Habits-FINAL-REPORT-7-27-15.pdf>, 2014;
- Mossberger, Karden, "Toward digital citizenship – Addressing inequality in the information age," in Andrew Chadwick & Philip N. Howard (eds.) *Handbook of Internet Politics*, New York, Routledge, 2009;
- Newlands, Murray, *Top 5 ways social media influences politics* <http://murraynewlands.com/2011/06/top-5-ways-social-media-influences-politics/>, 2011;
- Newman, Nic, *The rise of social media and its impact on mainstream journalism*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/The%20rise%20of%20social%20media%20and%20its%20impact%20on%20mainstream%20journalism.pdf>, 2009;
- Newman, Nic, *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2012: Tracking the future of News*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Digital%20News%20Report%202012.pdf>, 2012;
- Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis, *What Is Happening to Our Media?*, <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/what-happening-our-media>, 2012;
- O'Reilly, Tim, *Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software*, <http://www.oreilly.com/pub/a/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html>, 2005;
- Russ-Mohl, Stephan, *Gazetaria*, K&B, 2010;
- Saffo, Paul, *Farewell Information, it's a Media Age*, [http://saffo.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/essay\\_farewellinfo.pdf](http://saffo.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/essay_farewellinfo.pdf), 2012;
- Solis, Brian. Is Twitter the CNN of the new media generation?, <http://techcrunch.com/2009/06/17/is-twitter-the-cnn-of-the-new-media-generation/>, 2009;
- Stagliano, Riccardo, *Gazetaria 2.0 – Tëmerresh me informacionnëkohën e internetit*, Instituti Shqiptar i Medias, 2004;

- Stieglitz, Stefan, Dang-Xuan, Linh, "Social media and political communication: a social media analytics framework," *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, December 2013, Volume 3, Issue 4, 2013, pp. 1277-1291;
- Stieglitz, Stefan, Brockmann, Tobias and Dang-Xuan, Linh, "Usage Of Social Media For Political Communication," PACIS 2012 Proceedings. Paper 22, 2012;
- Shirky, Clay, "The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere and Political Change," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90 (1), p. 28 – 41, 2011;
- Trottier, Daniel, Fuchs, Christian, "Theorising Social Media, Politics and the State – An Introduction," in Daniel Trottier & Christian Fuchs (eds.), *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube*, New York, Routledge, 2015;
- Tumasjan, Andranik, Sprenger, Timm O. Sandner, Philipp G., Welp, Isabell M., "Predicting Elections with Twitter: What 140 Characters Reveal about Political Sentiment," The Fourth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media, 2010;
- The Aspen Institute. *Media and Democracy, A Report of the 2008 Aspen Institute Forum on Communications and Society*, Washington D.C, 2009; *The Economist*. "Beppe Grillo Five-star menu," <http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21571886-comedian-and-populist-whoseresult-may-be-underestimated-five-star-menu>, 2013;
- The Guardian*. "The world's 50 most powerful blogs," <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2008/mar/09/blogs>, 2009;
- von Alemman, Ulrich, *Das Parteiensystem der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Wiesbaden, Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden GmbH, Germany, 2010;
- Zappavigna, Michele, *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media: How we use language to create affiliation on the web*, London, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2012.