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MEDIATISATION AND SELF-MEDIATION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: NEW CITIZENSHIP PRACTICES AND SOCIAL MEDIA¹

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Many studies on the use of social media in citizens' political engagement conceptualise such actions in terms of new and unique civic strategies, emerging forms of political behaviour, or ongoing transformations of citizenship. This paper proposes an alternative approach based on the concept of mediatisation of the political sphere. Mediatisation has traditionally been viewed as the process of infiltrating the "media logic" into the political process and public policy. Political actors adjust their communication strategies, decision-making processes and policy making to popular media formats in order to achieve influence, legitimize their actions and shape the political agenda through media presence. The formats of television, show-biz and the news industry are of particular relevance. In our view, mediatisation affects not only political institutions and politicians, but also citizens and their political practices. It is not only a question of new channels of communication for participants or digitalisation, i.e. the new online procedures for interaction with state and local authorities within e-democracy. Mediatisation at this level is also influenced by social media, their capabilities with synchronous, asynchronous communication, and user-generated content, as well as by the use of modern portable devices with a permanent internet connection. Thus, traditional political participation is complemented by additional actions and representation in the media space. The mediatisation of political participation occurs at both the individual and collective level and adds new tools to the repertoire of citizens' political action, particularly in political activism and within social movements. Self-mediated political participation is a logical continuation of identity construction processes mediated by ICTs. The self-representation of political action in social media becomes as an act of performative publicity in the online public sphere. The implications of this for political systems have yet to be explored, but there is already evidence of new effects of political mobilisation and new public discourses, offering alternative agendas for the government.

Key words: political participation, mediatisation, self-mediation, self-mediated political participation, public sphere, citizenship, political mobilisation, ICT, Internet, social media.

Introduction. The deep integration of social media and related media practices in people's everyday life fuels belief in their capacity to enhance citizens' political activism, particularly in the open, street-level confrontation with decisions of the authorities. Examples of civic movements around the world that have made social media a tool to mobilise supporters both online and offline, and used it as a platform to promote the discourses and values of these communities in the public sphere (e.g., the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street, Euromaidan, protests in Hong Kong and Belarus), have reinforced the link between information and communication technologies (ICTs) and political activism for democratic processes. On the other hand, the experiences of Brexit and the 2016–2020 U.S. elections, the anti-vaccination campaigns during the COVID-19 epidemic highlighted the dark side of this interconnection. Campaigns of disinform-

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mation, manipulation of public opinion, astroturfing, open calls to undermine state institutions and the democratic order against the background of problems with data privacy, surveillance and online bullying, new deep fake technologies, continued commercialisation and increased non-transparentness of social media algorithms, give techno sceptics many reasons to proclaim the decline of democratic participation.

The analysis of such changes leads to the need to revise or refine classical political science concepts and theoretical models, searching for new explanatory strategies aligned with contemporary realities. In this paper, by using general scientific and political science methods of analysis we aim to examine the process of reorganising the political participation repertoires available to citizens in the mediatised political sphere.

Participation, media, and democracy

The theory of political participation developed actively since the mid-twentieth century in connection with attempts to conceptualise the main parameters of the institutional design of democratic states. This line of research was initiated by the study “Civic Culture” of American political scientists Almond and Verba, who viewed participation as an essential element of political culture. The classic definition of political participation was proposed in the 70s by Verba and Nie. They defined it as the direct or indirect influence of citizens on forming political institutions and their activities. Scholars also pointed out that the degree of citizens’ participation in political life can be different and depends on several social factors such as socio-economic status, interest in politics, political competence, availability of necessary resources for participation, etc. [1]. Their conclusions were supplemented in the studies of M. Kaaze, J. Nagel, L. Milbrett, L. Koeser, S. Roccan, S. Huntington and many other scholars, who analysed specific statistical parameters, normative principles, mechanisms and patterns of political participation in different countries. While early studies narrowed political participation to citizens’ voting and campaigning in a competitive election process that operates a system of representation, more recent developments have significantly expanded the content of this political science concept. Thus, for instance, one of the well-known typologies proposed by Brady (2003) considers the electoral and non-electoral political activity of citizens, dividing the latter into conventional (formal and informal contacts with political actors, volunteer work in political organisations) and non-conventional (signing petitions, various forms of public protests, etc.) [2].

The transformation of political participation practices is currently fuelled by new economic, socio-political and cultural factors. The decline of electoral activity in developed democracies, the reduction of political party membership alongside the rise of populist and far-right movements, the crisis of classical ideologies, the spread of cynicism and depolitisation, the popularisation of civic activism, protest activity, and politically motivated consumer experience, new paradigms of lifestyle politics, the actions of global quasi-institutionalised social and political movements are changing the classical idea of citizenship and its practices.

Modern societies are undergoing a structural change of social relations, and citizens’ everyday behaviour is framed mainly by the latest communication technologies and media institutions [3]. All aspects of human life are becoming increasingly dependent on the means of storing and transmitting the information. ICTs are becoming the medium that permeates everyday practices such as interpersonal communication, cooking recipes, reading the news, trading and doing business, organising public events, declaring citizenship and interacting with the institutions of power within democratic procedures.

The mediatisation of the political systems of modern states, i.e., the significant increase in the role of communication media in political practices and the expansion of mediated communication in political space [4], actualises the problems of interaction between political actors and citizens on the principles of democracy.

It is worth adding that there are differences in the use of terminology among scholars. Due to the lack of a coherent conceptualisation, researchers from the U.S. and U.K., as opposed to authors from continental Europe and Scandinavia, predominantly use the concept of ‘mediation’ in this context. However, this paper takes the position that ‘mediation’ has to be viewed as a more neutral term which means that political information is communicated through the use of a particular medium but without considering the context of potential impacts or transformations in this process [5; 6].

Mediatisation and political participation

Historically, the main topic of political science research on mediatisation has been analysing the intersection of political process and the news media industry represented in analogue and digital form, i.e., radio, newspapers, magazines, television, etc [7; 8]. With its main developments in the 1980s and 1990s concerning television, the media factor is considered in terms of propaganda, mobilisation of the population and manipulation of public opinion.

While studying the mediatisation of politics, scholars have noted the contradictory effects of the increasing media use in political competition. On the one hand, politics and the state decision-making system are becoming a much more open and public sphere, accessible to the average observer. On the other hand, to increase their public profile, politicians choose messages and public images that conform to the media system’s genre conventions and internal rules. Thus, they become dependent on journalistic traditions and the existing media consensus on the content and parameters of news discourse. The use of popular marketing techniques of political storytelling, such as the artificial polarisation of opinions, simplification of public issues, stereotyping and archotyping, the personification of state achievements are the illustrations of this trend. Therefore, the peculiarities of the struggle for power represented in mass-media can mislead citizens. This might arise severe obstacles in the activities of institutions that represent and protect collective interests; moreover, the quality and effectiveness of the government may be adversely affected. The subject of scholarly debate here is the relationship between the current political process and the media and how the latter is an independent social institution in which political actors are guided by media rather than by political logic [7].

However, the mediatisation of politics is not limited only to the direct or indirect transformation of the media forms of political institutions and politicians by changing their media patterns.

The reconfiguration of the citizens’ political-media frames requires additional attention. As social transformations associated with informatisation, digitalisation, the spread of new media among the general public and their incorporation into politics lead to a reconfiguration of the indicators of citizens’ political activity environment, the following vital parameters of political communication have been altered:

- accessibility of political information;
- accessibility of political actors;
- accessibility of contact with other citizens;
- accessibility of political communities and associations;
- accessibility of means and instruments of participation [9].

The new realities of social and political relations are changing the models and contexts for engaging people in advocating political alternatives that address their needs and demands. These are the preconditions for the mediatisation of citizens’ political participation.

While taking into account the increasing role of media use in citizens’ political behaviour, we do not call for a re-articulation of the current laws of power relations in society towards media determinism. Instead, the focus is on analysing the changes that occur with the impulses of demands and support channelled within the political system and, accordingly, on new political

practices. The mediatisation of political participation results from citizens adapting to the new polysubjective format of the media landscape and expanding their role in the political process. This adaptation takes place in three dimensions:

- the new means of communication that citizens use;
- the new communication strategies they apply;
- the new political discourse they produce.

Social media can act as aggregators of political information and news for citizens, and are characterised by a large number of independent data sources, limited gatekeepers, and the plurality of interpretations of specific political events. At the same time, new media architecture, ICTs, mobile applications, and modern devices have reformatted the consumerist type of media content consumption. The line between producers and consumers of information has been blurred, audiences now act as producers [10], who are not passive viewers and observers but respondents to mass media messages with the opportunity to create and share news and ideas of own authorship in their social networks. Many forms of political behaviour related to political communication, the functioning of social networks and the building of communities of interest are carried out online or using the Internet.

Reflecting on this cultural background, Henry Jenkins idealistically speaks of the emergence of a ‘participatory society’, replacing the ‘consumer society’, and notes its distinctive features:

- the low entry threshold for creative expression and civic engagement;
- the ease with which cultural artefacts can be created and disseminated to audiences;
- a certain amount of informal mentoring, where the skills of ‘connoisseurs’ are passed on to newcomers;
- the conviction of society members that their individual experiences are important to society as a whole;
- awareness among members of society of some degree of global social interconnectedness between them [11].

Horizontal connections among Internet users, stimulated by the spread of social media platforms, are developing in the context of a growing need for self-actualisation, a search for new identities, new forms of representation and recognition. At the same time, classical identities (gender roles, nationality, citizenship, cultural attitudes, belonging to a particular socio-economic group, class, political position) do not disappear. On the contrary, they find new opportunities for manifestation in the online environment.

New channels of mobilisation, reduced transaction costs in information exchange, Internet initiatives (netroots), virtual activism and digital public campaigns, transnational forms of participation and new networked ways of organising social movements are changing the political participation practices. However, it must be emphasised that traditional political involvement, based on identification with parties, specific ideologies and social issues, is also present. All potential forms of political participation of citizens are mediatised. This can be seen in Facebook chatting with political actors, check-ins at polling stations, protest teams in Telegram channels, online chats with political party activists, and extensive online campaigning by voters themselves during elections.

Thus, contemporary political participation practices are inherently mediatised because they derive from common features of social media consumption that encourage the user to create and distribute content by incorporating appropriate tools into user interfaces and software design [12]. On the other hand, this intention is reinforced by mobilisation campaigns carried out by political actors and non-governmental organisations involving interactivity and gamification.

Mediatisation of collective action

The current re-actualisation of the political identity components, in which the citizens' values are prioritised not by political doctrine but by those derived from their lifestyle and personal experience, also significantly influences the expansion of the collective action repertoire within the mediatisation of political participation.

The use of Internet technology and mobile devices changes approaches within social movements. Street protest in the form of a mass demonstration or occupation of urban space becomes an essential form of political community experience and solidarity. The impulse to express oneself leads to numerous examples of the carnivalization of street actions, the use of elements of performance, happening, and installation. At the same time, the lack of a collective agenda, the organisational problems that most non-institutionalised network structures have to deal with, and the leadership crisis turn many examples of collaborative political activity into a collection of individual mediated protests (that can be called a 'wiki-protest'), unable to create a discernible impact on the political balance of power and political decision-making processes. However, the examples of political networks with different sources of motivation such as Indignados, Occupy Wall Street, Euromaidan, Gilets Jaunes, Black Lives Matter show that citizens who are engaged in mediated political participation can become a significant force in the political landscape and the protest can perform as a power locus.

Cammaerts (2002), basing his reflections on M. Foucault's 'Technologies of the Self', notes that collective agents employ communicative practices to disseminate and mobilise (Disclosure), to organise and coordinate (Examination), and to record and archive (Remembrance). That is, using social media, participants in collective action solve six interrelated tasks:

1. To spread the discourse of a social movement more widely through different communication channels.

2. To mobilise the supporters for action online and offline.

3. To organise and to communicate within a movement.

4. To coordinate the action on the ground as well as on social media simultaneously.

5. To record and self-record the events, using mobile phones.

6. To preserve the protest artefacts that make connections between different movements and articulate alternative individualised visions of events [13].

It has to be emphasised that such media representations of political participation can carry serious risks for political activists themselves, especially when taking place in transitional and non-democratic political systems. Personal information posted on social media without proper protection can easily fall into the hands of abusers and be used against the citizens themselves. Under the guise of fight against extremists, terrorist networks, and organised crime, many governments spy on citizens, wage war on dissent and political opposition, ostensibly protect public morals, and impose censorship. Tools to monitor public opinion in social media are increasingly being introduced. Special units are being set up to shape an interpretation of current political events that benefit the authorities. As a result, citizens are forced to abandon modern forms of political activism.

Forms of political participation involving the use of ICTs, in addition to traditional resources provided by socio-economic status and level of political activity, require additional competence from citizens, as they are directly dependent on Internet skills, devices, hardware and software [14]. What matters is how much time a person spends on the Web and how much priority is given to this particular media type. Therefore, an exceptional environment of the mediated political participation envisages the urban space of a megapolis. Nowadays, city dwellers realise their everyday strategies of media consumption and media production in a unique cul-

tural context, which Silverstone calls 'Mediapolis' [15]. Large cities provide the socio-technical infrastructure necessary for the operation of mass information and communication networks. The complex multi-layered system of urban communities makes possible the coexistence of different hierarchies of the importance of public events and alternatives to the political agenda. The political participation of mediapolis residents is realised through different political matrices that reflect lifestyles, collective interests, and visions of just social order, drawn from the media and captured in the media.

There is an ongoing debate in the scholarly community as to whether mediatisation promotes the engagement of citizens who were previously passive and preferred absenteeism over any reaction to government policies or whether it leads to the provision of new channels of communication only for the politically active part of society that can afford access to technology and has the necessary competences [16].

The manifestations of mediated political participation can vary significantly from country to country, depending on society's economic and information level, the political context, government regulations, and advances in technology. As far as ICTs continue to develop intensively, the Internet and new media keep transforming, and the audiences are still actively growing, thus, any attempt to classify this communication system will encounter new emerging factors. Bimber and Davies, for example, in their book 'Campaign Online', a detailed study of the Internet use in the 2000 U.S. elections, argue persuasively that political websites are predominantly visited by supporters of the respective political force and, therefore, have no impact on the electorate, which is still undecided. They conclude by suggesting that the Internet will provide little influence on politics within the U.S. as it maintains the existing system of political relations rather than changing it. Their remarks about the role of political websites are still valid today. But the general prediction was already disproved in 2004, when Republican Howard Dean effectively mobilised supporters and fundraised via the Internet [17]. If Barack Obama's first online election campaign was seen as an innovative model of communication with voters, then during the 2012 and all the following elections, the use of social media became a mainstream practice, which all candidates, regardless of political camp, have since integrated to their campaigns. The 'maturation' of technology transforms its perception into an integral, traditional part of life, as well as ritualising its use.

Self-mediated political participation

The act of political participation, due to technology, can be easily captured through audio-visuals and text messages. With the synergy of the everyday and online spheres, citizens have the opportunity to broadcast their political activity into the Internet media space to make it online-public. This motivation refers to the maxim 'an event that did not leave a digital footprint had not happened'. We call this new peculiar type of participatory practice by the term 'self-mediated political participation'. Self-mediated political participation is the activity of ordinary citizens to affect the political decision-making, which they represent in the media space through social media.

Self-mediated political participation stands for a separate genre of public communication and not a part of the well-known forms, such as media support for professional and semi-professional politicians, citizen journalism, memoirs, participation in content production by professional journalists, bloggers and mass-media, etc. Self-representation in the social media during political action is a particular form of publicity because it combines political participation, a voice and a request for recognition. As Chouliaraki (2010) points out, although such self-mediation unfolds in the public sphere, it acts as performative publicity rather than the traditional speech act, as mentioned by J. Habermas. In this sense, such publicity is closer to H. Arendt's interpretation of the 'space of appearance' that emerges from people's communication and joint action. Performative publicity makes the voice meaningful in itself created with the understanding that

it will reach the attention of the audience as a sovereign act of citizenship per se [18]. With this politicised practice, the citizen, on the one hand, seeks to be heard and, on the other hand, experiences certain publicity obligations (including content quality) because he or she knows that their message will compete for the attention of social media users with thousands of other messages.

Thumim (2010) identifies three main properties (conditions) of technology-enabled self-mediation that can be projected onto social media: simplicity (user-friendliness), urgency (do it now), and accessibility (possibility of (co)participation) [19]. All of these properties, in a certain way, frame the options for self-mediated political participation.

So, what communication practices for creating political user-generated content can be distinguished? Turning to examples from art, the pattern of media-processing one's own social experience as a means of reflection and self-realisation can be illustrated by such well-known works of art as 'Man with a Movie Camera' (1929) by the famous Ukrainian director Dziga Vertov and 'Tentative d'épuisement d'un lieu parisien' (1975) by the French experimentalist writer Georges Perec. When it comes to modern media practices, these may include: photos near a ballot box at the polling station posted on Facebook, an online broadcast to a private YouTube channel during a political meeting, a Twitter feed of a political action event, Instagram selfies from a protest rally, a TikTok video from an appointment with a government official, etc. Key to this new genre of political communication is the unity of political action with the place and time of content creation. At the same time, due to the general state of constant online presence, the asynchrony between the moment of media content creation and its sharing disappears.

The properties of social media technology mentioned by N. Thumim are also crucial for the discussion regarding citizens' motivations for engaging in self-mediated political participation. There is a lot of research, both theoretical and empirical, on why citizens create user-generated content. Applying a cost-benefit model, Leung concludes that the main motives are the need for recognition, socialisation and entertainment. He also determined that people who enjoy receiving praise from others tend to produce and publish more content [20]. Mitchelstein identified that different media activities might be driven by different motives, mainly writing blogs was more related to the demand for discussion and socialisation, and commenting on news websites was more consistent with the need for self-expression [21].

Without claiming to be exhaustive or complete, we would like to add to the motives mentioned above a few more, which could be important drivers for the political discourse production during self-mediated political participation:

- therapeutic (to feel better)
- democratic (to make a difference)
- deliberative (to engage the audience in a public discussion)
- playful (to conform to rules)
- protest (to challenge traditional social media genre schemes).

While contributing to the visibility and observability of political action in the public sphere, self-mediated political participation is not a guarantee for deliberation, collaboration, and social change. By using social media, one is drawn into inherently specific genre games, and the virtual identity that the user creates for each different platform can be endowed with varying configurations of 'owner' identity, depending on the political momentum, positioning and group traditions represented in the discourse of a particular Internet platform.

The public sphere of social media, shaped by producer communities, demands that Internet users reflect and retrospectively rationalise behaviour in line with current agendas, news occasions and popular interpretative strategies. The marginalised citizens also present specific discursive forms, acting as opposition and alternative to popular ideology and the cultural mainstream.

Actual location-specific political actions of citizens, transcoded in social media, emerging, on the one hand, as a documentary chronicle and narrative, and, on the other hand, as a discursive field where communicative acts are linked through hashtags, likes, retweets and geotags. Actions are turned into media content in real-time through the political activists' engagement and bystanders and journalists involved in the process. This self-mediation conditions the expansion of the topos of political activism, the scene of the event, and ensures the engagement of a broad audience of commentators and interpreters who produce additional political meanings and introduce the discourse of the act of political participation into the public sphere. Thus, political participation is channelled through social media, becoming a personal narrative of the activist and stimulating further mobilisation of supporters through virality and emotional contagion (that can be called 'viral gatekeeping'). Emotional narratives based on personal experience of political action are presented to the audience as credible because they do not pretend to be objective. This attracts the attention of other active citizens who disseminate information, contribute to professional media, organise fundraising, etc. In these contexts, the audience engages through watching events online and discussions, as well as by performing new forms of participation [22].

Conclusions. The introduction of media practices into citizens' political activity leads to reorganisation of their action repertoire, the new possibilities for political communication according to the 'bottom-up' model and significant development of the political participation discourse. The consequence of mediatization is that individual and collective citizens' interests in the political field are enriched with a toolkit that provides new ways, techniques and methods of contact, cooperation and mobilisation. Regardless of the scale of the problem expressed, every act of political participation can potentially become a subject of discussion in the public sphere, stimulating public debate about the authorities' actions and the population needs, i.e., creating a new political agenda.

Currently, it is very promising to include into the political research subject field such vital parameters of mediatised political participation as the agency, new political activity patterns, collective action indicators, social capital, principles of self-organisation, subject-subject interactions systems, voice styles, mobilisation methods and techniques, etc.

It is evident that with the development of mobile devices, advances in software design, technological evolution of the social media in liveblogging, online streaming, augmented reality, and the introduction of e-democracy tools, the content of the mediatised political participation will also alter.

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МЕДІАТИЗАЦІЯ ТА САМОМЕДІАЦІЯ ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ УЧАСТІ: НОВІ ГРОМАДЯНСЬКІ ПРАКТИКИ І СОЦІАЛЬНІ МЕДІА

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Чимало наукових робіт, присвячених використанню соціальних медіа у разі політичної активності громадян, концептуалізують такі дії в категоріях нових унікальних громадянських практик, нових форм політичної поведінки та поточної трансформації громадянськості. Ця стаття пропонує альтернативний підхід, ґрунтуючись на концепції медіатизації політичної сфери. Медіатизація традиційно розуміється як процес проникнення «логіки медіа» у політичний процес та публічну політику. Політичні актори підлаштовують свої комунікаційні стратегії, процеси ухвалення рішень та розробку політичного курсу під популярні формати масмедіа, щоб досягати впливу, легітимізувати

свої дії та формувати загальний порядок денний завдяки активності у медіапросторі. При цьому насамперед маються на увазі формати телебачення, шоу-бізнесу та індустрії новин. На наше переконання, медіатизація впливає не лише на політичні інститути та політичних діячів, але також і на громадян та їхні політичні практики. Йдеться не лише про нові канали комунікації учасників чи діджиталізацію, тобто оцифровування процедур взаємодії з державною та місцевою владою в межах електронної демократії. Медіатизація на цьому рівні відбувається також під впливом соціальних медіа, їхніх можливостей із синхронної, асинхронної комунікації та створення контенту самими користувачами, а також завдяки використанню сучасних портативних девайсів з постійним підключенням до Інтернету. Таким чином, традиційна політична участь доповнюється додатковими діями та репрезентаціями у медіапросторі. Медіатизація політичної участі відбувається як на індивідуальному, так і колективному рівні та додає нові інструменти до репертуару політичних дій громадян, зокрема в політичному активізмі та в межах громадських рухів. Самомедійована політична участь є наслідком медіатизації та стає логічним продовженням процесів конструювання ідентичності засобами інформаційно-комунікаційних технологій. Саморепрезентація політичної дії у соціальних медіа виступає актом перформативної публічності для онлайнової публічної сфери. Наслідки цього для політичних систем ще мають бути детально досліджені, але вже зараз є свідчення про нові ефекти політичної мобілізації та нові громадські дискурси у публічній сфері, що пропонують альтернативні порядки денні для влади.

Ключові слова: політична участь, медіатизація, самомедійована політична участь, публічна сфера, ІКТ, Інтернет, соціальні медіа, політична мобілізація.