Abstract

Norbert Merkovity

Self-mediatisation and Populism: The rise of Attention-based Politics in Hungary

According to scholars the use of mediatization could be understand as communicative representation of politicians (Mansbridge 2009) or spin doctoring (Esser 2008), but either way it ends in self-representation and in "self-initiated stage-management" (Esser 2013, 162). From this perspective the concept of mediatization in politics is not an automatism, it is a functional principle of media, more preferably the social media. If we exclude automatism then we have to find volitional activity on the side of political actors. This activity could be seen as self-broadcasting that could be conceptualized as self-mediatization of politics and it could be the starting point for populist political communication.

Populist political communication aims to mobilize a new, or at least larger mass of voters. However, populist parties are (were) typically neglected actors in the national media in Hungary and in other countries throughout Europe. The so-called cordon sanitaire drove these politicians to look for alternative routes for communication, through which they could reach potential voters. Several empirical studies describe this process (e.g. Bos, van der Brug, & de Vreese, 2010; Koopmans & Muis, 2009; Vliegenthart, 2012). To sum these up briefly, the populist politicians needed to call attention to themselves, then they had to maximize attention, in

order to break through the resistance of traditional media at a given point. Such politicians are familiar with the workings of social media, and know how attention can be sustained.

This presentation will introduce the phenomenon of attention-based politics as a driver for populism: when politician use Twitter and Facebook in order to attract, maximize, and direct the attention of followers and journalists. The used communication techniques on social networking sites set the focus of analysis on the attention-based politics Previous research results showed that social networking sites are significantly more often used for informational (press conference like) communication (Merkovity 2016). However, the politicians' behavior could change this picture.