Social networks, politics and Commitment 2.0: Spanish MPs on Facebook

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Abstract: In a technologically and sociologically advanced society, the organizations that do not use the new media and the cyber communication techniques are probably doomed to failure. In this virtual sphere the social networks constitute a suitable resource and channel for the implementation of political marketing 2.0, as it provides a scenario where the interaction with users is possible. From this perspective, we verified their presence of the 350 members of the Spanish Congress on Facebook, the country's most popular social network, in order to establish the predominant typologies, updating frequency, contents, resources, and the types of information posted in this spaces. This article also examines the interactivity of MPs in what we have termed Commitment 2.0: political communication in personal contexts such as social networks requires going from the participatory attitude to the participatory action; that is, to accept the interaction 2.0 as the correct behaviour on the network.

Keywords: political marketing; online marketing; social network; Facebook; political profiles.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Social networks, political marketing and Commitment 2.0. 3. Hypothesis, methodology and objectives. 3.1. Methodology. 4. Results. 4.1. MPs' official online spaces listed on the Congress's website. 4.2. General data obtained from Facebook's search engine. 4.2.1. Distribution of data across parliamentary groups. 4.2.2. Distribution of data across gender groups. 4.2.3. MPs with presence on Facebook. 4.2.4. The response from "Friends". 4.3. Levels of Commitment 2.0. 4.4. Facebook's notifications via email. 5. Discussion and conclusions. 6. Bibliography.

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1. Introduction

Communication 2.0 has overcome the boundaries of the web because the evolution of the technological tools has enabled everyday life to be conceived in terms of social networks as the scenario for group and individual interactivity, as a form of public and private organisation, as individual and collective manifestation. What began as a form of virtual demonstration of the

interpersonal private sphere (relationships among friends) has generated a new formula of social relationship that today involves 940 million people worldwide[1].   Social networks and philosophy 2.0 have been integrated into all kinds of organisations - public or private, profit or non-profit- and as a consequence the web 2.0 is also enterprise 2.0, politics 2.0 and government 2.0. And the networks are a space for meetings, business, and debate.

Social networks constitute a new environment and a new communicative platform for citizens and organisations in a multidirectional communication model (everybody with everybody), but with the commitment to interact, i.e. one has to be a proactive user in the virtual communities in which one freely decides to join. The network is global but is woven with small networks in which each member decides who to accept in his or her group of friends to interact with them.

In 2008 the social networks were catapulted as a tool for success in the election campaign that led to Barack Obama to the White House. From a vision of the social network as a productive scenario of participatory commitment, we wonder whether our politicians use social networks in their communication strategies. This research tries for the first time to establish the level of activity and social commitment or, as we intend to call it, the Commitment 2.0 of the 350 Members of the Spanish Congress (hence MPs) based on the analysis of their profiles in the most popular social network (Facebook), the study of their messages, and their levels of direct interaction with citizens.

In 2010 *Intelligence Compass*, a geo-marketing and communication strategic agency, studied the relationships established by politicians and individuals in the field of political communication in four social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Xing)[2]. The object of the study was to verify whether the success model of Obama's political marketing on the Internet could be replicated in Spain, especially in the municipal and regional elections of 2011.

The result was the *Informe sobre política y Redes Sociales* (Report on politics and social networks), which affirmed that almost all politicians (94%) ranked the utility of social networks as outstanding, and that eight in ten (78%) believe that the networks were an excellent way to reach citizens. However, the use of social networks as central axis of their campaigns was ranked as outstanding only by 17% of participants while the majority (79%) ranked it as "remarkable"[3].

Moreover, four of every five (79%) interviewed citizens said they had at least one politician as contact in their social network(s). Most participants confessed that this was because they like politics (32%). Among those who did not have any politician as a 'friend', the majority (47%) recognised that they were not interested in being associated with any particular party. More than half of respondents (65%) considered it was positive that politicians were involved in social networks, while a third (34%) considered this move as something negative. The majority (86%) also remarked that social networks should be used to improve relationship with citizens.

The report on politics and social networks outlined what politicians and citizens think about the usefulness of social networks. Once we examined the report, we thought it was interesting and necessary to verify what the politicians actually do on the social networks based on a representative sample of active politicians with communication capacity and resources and with a noticeable interest to inform the citizenry what they do and what they think of what others are doing. This is the starting point of this research on the use of social networks by Spanish MPs, who are well aware that in political marketing the social networks are a great tool and platform to undertake non-mediated communication activities, in which there are no intermediaries that re-work or encode the message and in which obtaining feedback from the audience is facilitated.

2. Social networks, political marketing and Commitment 2.0

Communication flows and attitudes are changing. The universalization of the possibility of becoming senders of messages that reach numerous groups through the Internet has led to the breakdown of the traditional scheme of linear communication and its replacement by circular or cluster models in which any individual may simultaneously become a receiver and sender (or re-sender) and which is prompting the media to change their attitude towards the audience, from the speech to the dialogue (Túñez, Solana and Abejón, 2010).

The social networks, due to the volume of participants and the conditions of control over the message, seem to be an ideal tool to gain followers in the political activity, both in the planning of great campaign performances and in the necessary field of interpersonal communication that all candidates need to promote to maintain or create their image, to disseminate ideas, to promote circles of support, to interact directly with their supporters, or to mark distances over their opponents. However, in order for this to happen it is necessary to reach certain levels of participation and presence that go far beyond having a blog or a profile in a social network. Let's see why.

The web 2.0 allows the creation of a collective intelligence from the exchange of experiences and knowledge through the Internet's easy-to-use communication tools that facilitate the creation and editing of texts, multimedia images and networks of contacts. The tools that enable these activities range from web programmes or platforms (blogs, wikis, social networks, photo spaces like Flickr, and video libraries like YouTube and Vimeo) to mobile devices with applications to update online information, without using a computer.

This is why web 2.0 began to be known as such when the free tools (like blogs) emerged in the Internet to allow any non-advanced user to create and share content without having to pay for the design of a website (Fages-Ramió, 2008). However, still today "the effects of different cybernetic applications such as social networks continue to be somewhat obscured by the paraphernalia of their triumphs and detractions, where they are exalted and demonised,

marginalised and centralised" (Torres, 2009: 73). In the context of political communication, this use of new technologies for the transmission of messages has caused the emergence of several descriptive terms of the new interactive scenario: "teledemocracy" (Arterton, 1987; Serra Giménez, 2002), "virtual politics" (Holmes, 1997), "electronic democracy" (Grossman, 1995) and "cyberdemocracy" (compare Dader, 2003; Dader and Campos, 2006).

Taking as a reference one of the websites 2.0 per excellence, Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), we find that it defines itself and the web 2.0 in general as the site that allows users to interact with other users and to modify the content in the website, in contrast with non-interactive websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of information that is provided to them. Nevertheless, to create or participate in a network in an environment 2.0 does not necessarily mean that users understand the benefits of sharing knowledge and learning from others by listening to what they say or comment. This requires what Fages-Ramió (2008) has termed attitude 2.0.

We propose to analyse political communication based on the role of the sender through what we have termed *Commitment 2.0* in order to include interaction as the behaviour that is implicitly assumed when becoming a user: accepting the commitment of going from having a participatory attitude to adopting a participatory action. Commitment 2.0 is based on the idea that participation in the environments 2.0 is not achieved with just a presence in that environment, but also requires the active contribution of both creators and users, exchange of opinions and content, so that both parties obtain benefits, in full harmony with the concept of marketing.

In the same line, politics 2.0 will also require the capacity of the politician to open up to the citizens, to encourage their participation, and to value their comments and opinions. The creation of blogs or profiles on social networks that only aimed at offering presence and lack participation will cause more discontent among the public than the absences will, because the benefits of the presences in environments 2.0 only start to be obtained when uni-directionality is removed, the feedback comes into play and communication becomes collaborative.

José Luis Dader (2003) studied the use of e-mail among Spanish MPs and ordinary citizens from 1999 to 2001. In 1999 only 46% of Spanish MPs made public their email address, while in 2001 the figure increased to 75%. The number of answered emails timidly rose from 6.4% in the first study to 21.7% in the second. With Campos, Dader (2006) extended his research on the use of internet among Spanish MPs and in 2004 they found that 88.6% of MPs made public their e-mail address. The figure was lower than in the European environment since, for example, in Italy it was 100% and France 93.4%. Only 17.4% of MPs replied the new message sent in 2005, which highlights the regression in comparison to 2001. As Dader points out, emails were made public but received messages were not responded, which indicates that the

actual use is lower than expected, which may discourage citizens from using electronic communications. In spite of the passing of years and the emergence of new platforms of digital communication, we will ratify later how this situation continues today in the relations between citizens and politicians through the social networks.

Social networks are a recent phenomenon but in the late 1990s, before the start of the stage 2.0, some strategies were developed to bring politicians closer to citizens through the Internet (Fages-Ramió, 2008). During their election campaigns political parties created support websites for their candidates and the most daring even included discussion spaces like forums or live chats. In 2002, with the expansion of blogs, politicians wanted to be part of this phenomenon and take advantage of their potential and resources.

The use of social networks in the political sphere has its origin in the triumph of Barack Obama. A sophisticated package of online tools based on the technologies of the social network, in the message and in sharing the success with his followers, helped Obama to win the presidency and changed the way of doing politics in the USA. His flagship was www.barackobama.com. All his efforts of communication were focused on this website, so that the potential voters had one-click access to all what Obama said, proposed or twitted from his inseparable Blackberry. Encouraged by this precedent, from 2008 onwards an increasing number of politicians decided to find a niche in the social networks, in what some authors have defined as a hybridisation of political marketing and social marketing.

Despite exchanges in political marketing do not have a monetary nature, just like the majority of exchanges involved in non-business marketing, when we talk about political marketing we always wonder whether there is a possible comparison with the marketing of mass consumption products and whether its techniques are similar to those used in general marketing. Specialists have opposing views (Barranco, 2003), since there are 1) some who believe that political marketing is a set of fully specific techniques due to the inherent philosophy of the subject, that is, the sale of candidates and political ideologies, and there are 2) others who believe that political marketing is just another branch of marketing, undistinguished from other specialties and whose unique difference is the implementation of some specific techniques.

What is certain, in any case, is that political marketing has an inherent problem: although it is a technique aimed at promoting a certain ideology, its practice opposes the version proposed by the theory of political marketing: instead of promoting ideas, it promotes candidates as solutions to public problems. Therefore, "placing emphasis on individuals, when giving explanations about the State, the parliament and political parties, involves the risk of making politics appears as a simple fight between public figures" (Gringas, 1998: 34) and often gives the impression that the product is the person and not their political projects (Ferrer, 1995).

How the public figures use the marketing tools? Given the fact that neither the communication nor political circumstances of today's society are as they used to be, we cannot expect political organisations to broadcast their programmes or present their candidates as they did in the past. The technological and sociological developments, added to increasingly larger populations with more sophisticated and more technologically advanced information and communication systems, are incompatible with out-dated and obsolete political communication (Castells, 1999: 387).

In this society in which political marketing, TV forums, and polls have replaced the face-to-face persuasion, the discussion in public places, and the direct expression of the citizenry (Trejo, 2000), political marketing reproduces elements that are similar to those found in commercial marketing, since both types involve a competitive situation in which users and/or voters must choose the most satisfactory option from the all those proposed.

This research examines these actions through the study of the presence and activity of MPs in social networks, in general, and in Facebook in particular, according to qualitative and quantitative criteria (communicative potential and number of users, respectively).

Table 1: Communication quality in Facebook

Facebook communication quality	
Digital reputation management	Very powerful. Allows capturing people showing in their profile the symbol 'I like'. The more interaction, the more visibility.
Corporate communications	Very powerful. The problem is saturation. There are more and more companies, pages, profiles, etc. and is difficult to stand out.
Products/events Communication	Excellent. Face-to-face and virtual activities that can be seen by all the network's users without the need of being contacts.
Visibility	Good tool, but the search engines still do not register it well.
Crisis prevention*	Allows the early detection of rumours or complaints.
Customer service	Excellent tool to contact the client/user.
Knowledge management	Good channel for sharing / exchanging opinions.
Internal communication	Its potential depends on the involvement with employees. Good option for events and news of the organisation.
Talent recruitment	Allows publishing searches, receiving immediate responses and finding interesting profiles although they are not in the market.
*Use yet to be determined	

Source: Author's creation with data from Dosdoce.com (2010).

Regarding users (understood also as the possible audience of the political message) Facebook is the most popular mainstream social network worldwide, since it has more than 500 million members, according to the internal meter of the network [4]. Another external meter, Alexa.com, reveals that it is the second most popular website in the planet and Spain, only surpassed in both cases by Google.

Each social network has its own guidelines and norms of behaviour. Therefore, following the Decalogue to take into account the social networks as a scenario of academic relationships (Túñez and Sixto: 2010), we have highlighted in table 2 the seven points we took into consideration when designing the research on the communication of Spanish MPs on Facebook, and whose application seems indispensable in political communication through social networks:

Table 2: Use of Facebook in political communication

Use of Facebook in political communication	
Is personal communication	Social networks constitute a web of relationships in which each user creates a virtual space of interpersonal communication, primarily with a playful, entertainment content, of empathy with his or her own circle (or network) of friendships with whom he or she willingly accepts to share the virtual stage.
Diachronic tool	Facebook provides a virtual meeting point where the invitation to enter is permanent and in which active participations are registered (publishing of audiovisual material or comments, joining or liking a campaign)… in interpersonal and collective communication (many to many) without the need to match temporarily in the (diachronic) action
Contents are pro-active	One of the most interesting aspects of the use of Facebook is certainly that it reinforces the idea that the one acting is the message and not the receiver in regular flows of communication. The content reaches the user without the user searching for it; the content is in his or her personal communication space every time he or she accesses it. The differences are very important because in this case the contents acquire a proactive dimension.
Improves rapport	Group relationships occur in personal spaces and this helps improving the politician-user relational climate. The network brings closer and humanises the intercommunication by developing it in personal environments.
Message has a very limited validity	The validity depends on the frequency with which the posts are renewed. What is interesting is what is on our wall, but even more when this publication appears on our contacts' home page which is renewed depending on the activity of all their friends. We understand that it must be a live wall, with constant inputs, and for this we must take into account that for many visitors the contact's news are limited to those that appear on the first page, or, at most, those that the scrolling allows seeing.
What is seen is consumed	Politicians must ensure that the important issues are posted on the wall. Not all users explore what's in other tabs of the page; most are satisfied with what they see on the main page: they look at what is exhibited at first sight.
Dialogue is better than speech	Communication in Facebook is not discursive but dialogic. Contributions must adhere to the formula of the network: short and concise to fit the text box without making the user to activate the "see more" button. The idea that we have to rank the content and encode the message in order for the receiver to have it all without doing any supplementary actions to request more information applies to the contents of any website and is more intense in the social networks.

Source: Túñez and Sixto (2010).

3. Hypothesis, methodology and objectives

Our hypothesis is that in spite of the momentum of online strategies and the use of social networks as a tool of political communication after the triumph of Barack Obama in the USA 2008 presidential election, Spanish politicians have not yet assumed the Commitment 2.0 and do not understand social networks as a secondary area of participation and reciprocity with the citizenry but instead see them as a dissemination platform in which a simple presence is enough.

At the beginning of the research we raised the following questions: Do Spanish politicians have profiles in the social networks? Do they use them? With what frequency? Are they are spaces of private, public, personal or political communication? Do they interact with the audience? Do they make decisions based on the comments posted by users in Facebook?

Based on the initial hypothesis and the questions we define the general and specific objectives of this research. The general objective was to identify the presence of Spanish politicians on Facebook and to assess their suitability for the implementation of the political marketing. The specific objectives were: a) to review the concept of political marketing, its strategies and digital implementation; b) to formulate and coin the concept of Commitment 2.0 as an indicator of cyberdemocracy; c) to quantify the presence and participation in social networks that was declared by MPs on the personal spaces within the website of the Congress; d) to identify and quantify the participation of the 350 MPs in Facebook, the largest social network; and e) to evaluate their level of Commitment 2.0.

3.1. Methodology

Apart from the essential bibliographic review that all research requires, for the selection of the network under study we resorted to internal and external meters that provided objective measurement and cybermetrics data.

For the development of this study we conducted the exploratory work of tracking and monitoring the records of the Congress's website and the social network Facebook.

1. We activated the links of the 97 personal sites offered in the Congress's website and quantitatively analysed the communicative offer of the MPs: own or party websites, blogs, networks, emails, phone numbers, and postal addresses. Results were recorded in a database specifically designed to collect the information of the communicative offer of the 97 links.

2. The search engine of Facebook (chosen as for being the most used network in Spain and the world) was used to locate the 350 members. We examined the entire universe of study because it was so small and analysing the entire universe would help minimising distortions. In this case, with n=350, a margin of error of 2%, and a confidence level of 99%, we needed

a (n) of 323 subjects. Reducing the confidence level to 95% meant working with a sample of 306 members. Therefore it was decided that N = (n) = 350 in order to make a reliable reading by strata (parliamentary groups).

Relying on a simulation of the participant observation technique from the perspective of the network's users, the review of profiles or pages of the 350 MPs was conducted by copying the full name of the MPs, taken from the official list of the Congress, in Facebook's search engine. In the case of MPs who had compound names and were not located in the social network, we search for them by using only one first name (and the two surnames) at a time.

The search was repeated 3 times to minimise errors. The analysis of the records was made in November and December 2010. The deadline was December 31, so posts made after this day were not covered by this study.

For both measurements, we designed an analysis sheet with the different plausible formats in the social network in order to be able to extract quantifiable data regarding: 1) type, authenticity and official nature of the format; 2) the fields of dissemination of content; 3) the type of content published; 4) hypertextuality; 5) relational monitoring; 6) updating frequency; 7) interactivity; and 8) active involvement of the subject.

We also carried out content analysis of the publications in order to try to determine the language (formal or informal), and the flows of communication (ascending or descending) to establish whether it was a horizontal or hierarchical communication, and to determine the interactivity (low, medium or high) and whether it is a one-way or two-ways communication (or whether it was a discursive communication or a dialogue), and the type of content (themes of the posts on the wall).

In parallel, a 0-10 scale was designed to quantify the degree of Commitment 2.0 of MPs through their profiles on Facebook. The scale increased depending on the levels of information, activity and interaction identified in each profile, as detailed in the results section (table 9).

On the other hand, we create a fake Facebook profile, pretending we were a 28-year-old man interested in politics and social networks. Through the fake identity we added contacts and positively identified those MPS whose records we were interested in tracking.

We also created a fake email account that was necessary for the registration of the fake profile on Facebook. We monitored the notifications received in the inbox (of the aforementioned fake email) from the social network during a week -from 13 to 20 November of 2010- and this was also used in the research.

This method responds to a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques which give greater rigour and value to the research, since they are not mutually exclusive, but complement and reinforce each other.

4. Results

Society tends to organise itself in virtual and interconnected communication networks with a progression of participation that evolves in a geometric scale, but their political representatives have just begun to use the network to facilitate interpersonal contact with the people they manage. Only one of every four MPs (25.14%) has a personal Facebook profile. The figure is almost halved if we speak of MPs who have an open profile, i.e., one that can be accessed by any user of the network (16.28%).

The range of possibilities is wide: from walls that only display passive activities (the new friends that have been added) to those offering photos and personal remarks or opinions on current events. Many times the social network is joined but not used or considered to be a platform to post information, already published on other media, about matters of interest that are promoted by or centred on the owner of the profile, or his or her political party, which even manages with similar formats and contents the profile of other members.

The analysis of the activity on open profiles allows to state that this is mostly a testimonial presence, without personal contributions. The proactivity of MPs as source and direct contact of the message that was developed for the citizens is not enough resource for a normal activity as members of the network.

4.1. MPs' official online spaces listed on the Congress's website

Our research allowed us to verify that although there were 88 official presences of MPs on Facebook, only 13 (14.77%) of them made this presence public and at the same time official in their personal space in the Congress's website.

The initial data are overwhelming. On the one hand, it means disinterest in social networks and their potential for direct communication and control of the message. On the other hand, the attitude of MPs constitutes a communicative obstacle because in spite of having an account in Facebook they do not include a link to it in their personal space in the Congress's website. This attitude could be interpreted as an interest in a private use of the network but in some cases this attitude is a symptom of apathy because the content in their walls is clearly political. From a perspective of interests, this presence on the social network does not have a purpose as MPs do not make the profile public or official and wait for users to find them.

The Congress's official website only provides links to the personal sites of 97 MPs, one of every four (27.71%). Of them, the greatest majority refers to blogs (22.28% of all MPs, which accounts for 80.41% of those who have a personal space online). One third of MPs who offer a link to their personal site from Congress's website (31.96%) make reference to a social

network, which means that only 8.58% of all MPs publish a form of contact via the social networks.

The most used social networks are Facebook and Twitter (13.4% and 12.37%, respectively). However, the profiles are not made public in the Congress's website; instead the user has to find them through a second level of inquiry, either within the MP's blog or website. In fact, we only found the case of an MP from the Popular Party, Soraya Santamaría Sáenz, whose unique reference on her personal official page was an account in a social network: Twitter. In the rest of the cases, MPs made clear references to blogs or websites, while the social network was hidden, in a second level, behind the logo of the network they had joined.

The existence of a blog does not guarantee communication (not even one-way communication), because we found examples of blogs with obsolete designs and even some that had not been updated since February 2008. There are also many cases of MPs from the popular party (PP) that offered links to the party's blogs, but did not offer personal or individual communication at the first level. There are plenty of poor presentations and repeated models and a scarcity of spaces with ideal expositional and structural quality.

It is also true that MPs give little importance to whether users to contact them in private and personal ways via e-mail. In fact, only 9.28% of MPs offer an email address in their personal page. They prefer spaces in which there is little interaction and in which the published information dominates over users' responses. Blogs require less effort than social networks, whose efficient operation requires a constant updating of content and interactive applications, and, as it occurs with email addresses, there is a preference for spaces that allow interaction but at a low level and where the users can communicate, but this requires more involvement than a simple comment or a 'like'. MPs seem to think "*all I care is publishing, it does not matter whether you answer*", which means that communication is interpreted as the dissemination of the message and that the effective communication (correctly decoded, interactive, with feedback) is neglected.

The results are presented in the following table:

Table 3: Links listed on the personal spaces of MPs within the Congress's official website

LINKS LISTED ON THE CONGRESS'S WEBSITE	MPs		
	N°.	% Total MPs (350)	% MPs with personal pages (97)
None	253	72.28	
Personal pages *(on the Congress's website)*	97	27.71	100
Links to any social network	31	8.58	31,96
Own Website	12	3.43	12,37
Blog	78	22.28	80,41
Facebook	13	3.71	13,4
Twitter	12	3.43	12,37
GFC	8	2.28	8,25
Flickr	8	2.28	8,25
YouTube	5	1.43	5,15
LikedIn	1	0.28	1,03
Featured mail	9	2.57	9,28
Other links	9	2.57	9,28

Source: Author's creation

If we perform an inverse reading, we find that none of the MPs with profiles on Facebook made it public on their personal space in a first level of exploration. This applies to all networks (except in the case of Twitter). However, nine out of ten MPs (87.5%) prefer to post their Congress email account and more than a third prefers to post a link to their personal blog (38.63%).

4.2. General data obtained from Facebook's search engine

The search for MPs' profiles on Facebook through the network's search engine offers very different results to those obtained from the website of the Congress: 88 MPs had a profile and one of them, José Luis Ayllón from the PP, also had an active page. Of them, only 57 made their wall open to any user. In other words, one of every four MPs (25.14%) decided to register on Facebook, but only 16.28% of all MPs had open and accessible profile on the social network.

Table 4: Activity of the MPs who were found using Facebook's search engine

Search with Facebook's search engine	Congress (350)		Facebook (88)		Open Profiles (57)	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Presence on Facebook	88	25.14	88	100	57	100
Males	55	15.71	55	62.50	37	64.91
Females	33	9.42	33	37.50	20	35.08
Page/profile*	89*	25.14	89*	100	58*	100
Page	10	2.85	10	11.36	8	14.03
Profile	78	22.28	78	88.63	49	85.96
Page + Profile	1	0.28	1	2.27	1	1.75
Full name	82	23.42	82	93.18	53	92.98
Open wall	57	16.28	57	64,72	57	100
With photo	84	24.00	84	95.45	57	100
Formal photo	50	14.28	50	56.81	33	57.89
Informal photo	33	9.42	33	37.50	23	40.35
Picture of a monument	1	0.28	1	1.13	1	1.75
Offers information	45	12.85	45	51.13	40	70.17
Basic information	25	7.14	25	28.40	22	38.59
Personal information	6	1.71	6	6.81	4	7.01
Information about their political party	4	1.14	4	4.54	4	7.01
Information about the Congress	4	1.14	4	4.54	4	7.01
Information about the Congress/party/personal life	6	1.71	6	6.81	6	10.52
Content of posts**						
Hybrid communication	16	4.57	16	18.18	16	28.07
Personal communication	1	0.28	1	1.13	1	1.75
Political Communication	29	8.28	29	32.90	29	50.87
Communicative tone*						
You/us	33	9.42	33	37.5	33	57.89
You/you people	1	0.28	1	1.13	1	1.75
Neutral	11	3.14	11	12.5	11	19.29
Updating*						
Daily update	21	6	21	23.86	21	36.84
Update every 3-5 days	12	3.42	12	13.63	12	21.05
Update every 6 or more	23	6.57	23	26.13	23	40.35
* Exceeds the total because 1 MP has 1 page and 1 profile (both active). ** Does not reach the total because there are open profiles that are inactive or do not have personal contributions but offer links to websites.						

Source: Author's creation

Although there are no substantial differences between the page or profile (apart from the fact that the page can be followed by an unlimited number of users and the profile has a limit on the number of friends), one of every five members (22.28%) preferred the profile format to communicate on Facebook. Yet the pages are much more successful, since their average number of supporters is 4,831, while average number of friends in profiles is 2,794.

Table 5: Links listed on the personal Facebook spaces of MPs who were found with Facebook's search engine

LINKS	Congress (350)		Facebook (88)		Open Profiles (57)	
	Nº.	%	Nº.	%	Nº.	%
Link to personal website	24	6.85	24	27.27	22	38.59
Party's website	4	1.14	4	4.54	3	5.26
+ 1 Website	3	0.85	3	3.4	2	3.5
Personal email	8	2.28	8	9.09	3	5.26
Congress/party email	2	0.57	2	2.27	2	3.5
Congress email	1	0.28	1	1.13	1	1.75
+ 1 mail	2	0.57	2	2.27	2	3.5

Source: Author's creation

The use of resources and tools that are beyond the interventions on the wall is very limited. The exceptions are some MPs who post photos or videos of their performance and participation in public events or fragments of their speeches in Parliament.

Table 6: Multimedia resources and tools used in Facebook by MPs who were found

with Facebook's search engine

MULTIMEDIA AND TOOLS	Congress (350)		Facebook (88)		Open Profiles (57)	
	Nº.	%	Nº.	%	Nº.	%
Videos	10	2.85	10	11.36	9	15.78
Political videos	10	2.85	10	11.36	9	15.78
Average videos per site	-	9.25		-	-	-
Photos	28	8	28	31.81	26	45.61
Political photos	22	6.28	22	25	21	36.84
Personal photos	3	0.57	3	2.27	2	3.5
Personal and political photos.	3	0.85	3	3.4	3	5.26
Forums	2	0.57	2	2.27	2	3.5

Source: Author's creation

## 4.2.1. Distribution of data across parliamentary groups

Of the parliamentary groups, the Basque is the only one that has a profile as a group on Facebook. Grouping the presence of MPs, the Popular Party (PP) (32.67%) almost doubles the Socialist Party (PSOE) (17.15%). However, if we only take into account the open walls the situation is reversed and the PSOE (83.3%) outnumbers the PP (57.14%). The open profiles of Socialist MPs profiles are more but they have smaller networks, since the Popular MPs have more followers/friends (8,908 against 955). The mixed group only includes the presence of the UPyD (Union, Progress and Democracy) and the *Nafarroa Bai* (Basque for 'Yes to Navarre'). They are female presences. In the rest of parliamentary groups, men overcome women in presence.

Table 7: Presence of MPs who were found with Facebook's search engine, distributed by parliamentary groups

GROUPS	Congress (350)		PSOE (169)		PP (153)		Catalan (10)		Basque (6)		ERC-IU-ICV (5)		Mixed (7)	
	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%
Presence on Facebook	88	25.1	30	17.1	49	32.7	2	20.0	2	33.3	3	60.0	2	28.5
Open walls	57	16.0	25	83.3	28	57.1	2	00.0	0	0.0	2	66.7	0	0.0

Source: Author's creation

Figure 1: Distribution of MPs with presence on Facebook by political affiliation
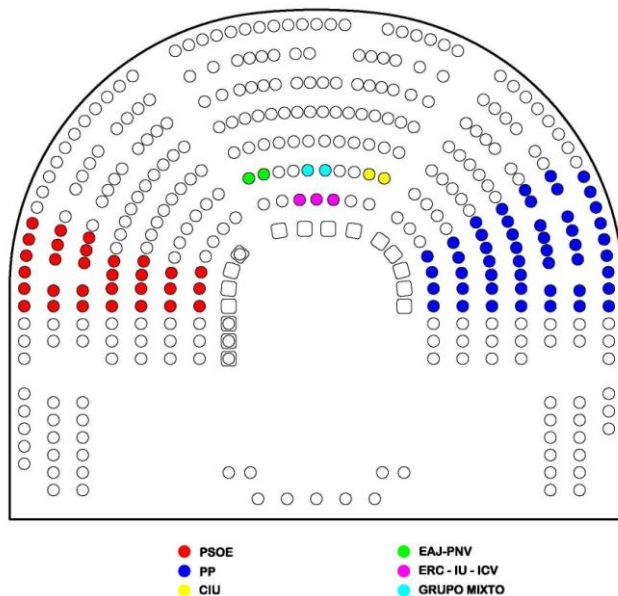
Source: Author's creation

Regarding the communicative modalities, the profiles triumph in all groups against the pages [5]. Socialists are the ones that offer more information to users on their spaces (68.96%) and also the ones that publish basic data the most (44.82%), in fact two times more than, for example, politicians from the PP (20%). The same happens with links to other websites (41.37% in the Socialist group against 20% of the Popular group), albeit paradoxically the popular have more followers.

The explanation may lie in a departure from the exclusively political communication towards more hybrid environments that mix politics and personal information to appear closer to the receiver and encourage debate and discussion spaces like forums. Politicians from the PP also make a more general use of audiovisual resources than other groups do, especially together with the Mixed Group, in the use of video. Perhaps this is why their number of entries are way above the average number of comments and 'likes' of the other groups, although the response levels are low, or very low, say, in comparison with the *CiU* group (50% vs. 6%).

4.2.2. Distribution of data across gender groups

If we make distinctions by gender, it seems that men have struggled less than women to move forward into the online world (15.71% vs. 9.42%). Taking into consideration that the Spanish Parliament is predominantly male (220 males and 130 females), we projected the data over the total number of men and women. Although men are still the majority, the percentages are more similar: 22% of female MPs have a profile on Facebook compared to 25% of the male MPs.

4.2.3. MPs with presence on Facebook

The analysis of results is performed on MPs. It seems appropriate, however, to put the data into perspective by taking as a reference the group of 88 MPs that we found in the social network. Most of them tried to make their identity clear since 92.98% of them registered their full name, 100% posted a profile picture, and 57.58% also posted a formal picture related to their political work.

When analysing in details what MPs want to let us know about them we found the first big lack: 48.87% of MPs with profile or page on Facebook did not provide any information and 28.4% only published basic information about their personal life, their party or the Congress. Something similar happens with the forms of contact that they offer, since only 12.49% made their email public -most addresses were personal (9.09%). In terms of the other websites mentioned on Facebook, the personal spaces (web/blog) predominated once again in 27.27% of MPs.

Their discourse is mostly political (32.9%) and their communication is friendly, since 37.5% of MPs use *you/us* forms when talking to the public.

Regarding the language, Spanish is predominant among MPs (48.86%) and their followers (44.31%), although Catalan was also used in some cases. We did not find interventions in Galician nor Basque in any of the analysed profiles or pages. However, these languages were used in blogs whose links were accessible via the personal pages of the Congress's official website.

MPs make a limited used of the audiovisual resources provided by the web 2.0. 11.36% of MPs incorporated videos (all political and none personal) in their spaces. The use of photos is greater (31.81%), but on the other hand, their discursive capacity is minor. The updating of Facebook spaces among MPs, ranges from those who use Facebook everyday -even with several daily contributions- (23,86%) and those who have it but do not update it (26,13%), which undermines entirely the idiosyncrasy of the social network.

4.2.4. The response from 'friends'

The analysis also measured the communicative impact generated by the last five entries in the walls. The average number of comments published by users as answers to the entries of the MPs was 7.53; while the average number of users who 'liked' the posts was 36.02. The interpretation is clear: clicking on a button requires less effort and involvement that writing a comment, which is also why there are entries that do not generate content or discussion. In contrast the contributions from followers encourage more comments (1.31) than 'likes' (1), which shows that citizens prefer to discuss among themselves than to refute the politician's message. Perhaps in many cases followers seek protection in a predictable absence of reply (only 2.28% replied), while those who do reply show an acceptable level of interaction (42.5% of cases). In this same vein, it is clear that nobody cares about forums: only 0.57% of MPs had forums and they always registered entries that supported the position of the creator.

Table 8: Interactivity of MPs found using the Facebook's search engine

INTERACTIVITY	Congress (350)		Facebook (88)		Open Profiles (57)	
	N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
Replies	8	2.28		9.09	8	14.03
Forums	2	0.57	2	2.27	2	3.5
Language used by MPs						
Spanish	43	12.28	43	48.86	43	75.43
Spanish + Catalan	3	0.85	3	3.4	3	5.26
Catalan	4	1.14	4	4.54	4	7.01
Language used by Friends						
Spanish	39	11.14	39	44.31	39	68.42
Spanish + Catalan	2	0.57	2	2.27	2	3.5
Catalan	5	1.42	5	5.68	5	8.77
Average number of owner's comments	7.53					
Average number of owner's 'likes'	36.02					
Average number of comments by friends	1.31					
Average number of 'likes' by friends	1					
N° of replies	42.5					
Average number of friends in pages	4,830.55					
Average number of friends in profiles	2,763.95					

Source: Author's creation

4.3. Levels of Commitment 2.0

The review of the activity of MPs on Facebook was complemented with an assessment of the level of Commitment 2.0 identifiable on the social network. To do this, we produced a scale of commitment according to the degree of participation and proactivity of each MP in the creation of content and the interaction with the members of their social network.

Absences on Facebook were rated with 0 points and from there upwards, in a gradual scale of up to 10 points, we evaluated the content, activity and type of profile. The scores increased with the increase in the openness of the profile and wall, owner's participation and the intervention of members of the network in the posts, the updating frequency, and indicators of the use of the network as a space for personal communication and management (language, tone, own production, etc.), although oriented to content of political character, or visibility of the political activity of the profile's owner.

The results show that the attitude of MPs towards the social network generally involves a very scarce or inexistent level of Commitment 2.0: the level of 83.7% MPs was zero or low, while only 7.42% had a high or excellent level of Commitment 2.0:

Table 9: Levels of Commitment 2.0 on Facebook

COMMITMENT 2.0 IN THE ACTIVITY OF MPS ON FACEBOOK						
CONTENT	RATING	TOTAL		COMMITMENT LEVEL 2.0		
Nothing	0	163	46.57%	Zero	250	71.42%
Wiki Empty pages	1	87	24.85%			
With external administrator	2	5	1.42%	Low	43	12.28%
Closed wall, with basic profile and no other contacts	3	38	10.85%			
Open wall without activity, or closed wall with links and information	4	7	2.00%	Medium	31	8.85%
Open wall with little activity, or only with links to other web content	5	12	3.42%			
Open wall with little activity, or only with links to other web content and posts made by 'friends'	6	12	3.42%			
Open and active wall with owner's political posts	7	17	4.85%	High	22	6.28%
Open and active wall with owner's political posts and posts made by 'friends'	8	5	1.42%			
Open and very active wall with owner's political and personal posts	9	3	0.85%	Excellent	4	1.14%
Open and very active wall with owner's political and personal posts and posts made by 'friends'	10	1	0.28%			

Source: Author's creation

The results can be interpreted as an inverted pyramid where the base is occupied by three quarters of all MPs (71.42%) whose commitment is null, and the peak is occupied by a minority of MPs (1.14%) whose activity is excellent. The MPs with low Commitment (12.28%) are in the middle of the pyramid, and this group is followed, in decreasing order and frequency, by MPs with medium and high levels of commitment (8.85% and 6.28%).

4.4. Facebook's notifications via email

One of the main advantages of creating profiles on Facebook is that users can be notified via email about updates made by the manager of a group they have joined. During the week dedicated to monitor the messages received in the Inbox of the fake user's email account (13 to 20 November, 2010) we only found one notification from the UPyD, which invited the members of the group to join a rally led by Rosa Díez and Antonio Robles in Barcelona.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Society tends to organise itself in virtual and interconnected communication networks with a progression of participation that evolves in a geometric scale, but their political representatives have just begun to use the network to facilitate interpersonal contact with the people they manage. Of the 350 MPs, only 31 announced their space on the social networks on their personal space within the Congress's official website (13 on Facebook). However, when we searched the MPs, name by name, with Facebook's search engine, we found 88 MPs who had a page or a profile, but only 57 of them allowed all users to write in their walls, while 49 only give permission to communicate to those they had accepted as friends.

The gap between the Facebook links made public in the Congress's website and the actual number of MPs with page or profile in Facebook (found by typing the names of the 350 MPs on the search box of the social network) is the first symptom of alert in the negligence in the use of social networks.

The low use of social networks indicates that MPs still do not trust the potential of social networks as a form of direct contact, as a platform to increase the visibility of MPs and their work, as a cyber-activity tool, as an early warning of potential conflicts, or as a discussion forum. For MPs social networks are still an interesting social phenomenon that they have not exploited yet despite the fact that, according to the *Informe sobre política y Redes Sociales (Report on Politics and Social Networks)*, almost all politicians (94%) valued the utility of social network as outstanding and eight out of ten (78%) believed the networks are an excellent way to reach citizens.

The low percentages of active use of Facebook in political promotion also highlights a disbelief in: the effectiveness of online cooperation and the potential retransmitting power of all the

members of the politician's community; the network's inherent exercise of horizontal communication among equals with the consequent humanisation of the politician; the expansion of political relations beyond the members of the organization to which the politician belongs; and the possibility of becoming a ubiquitous political actor: where there is connection there is presence on the social network.

The analysis of the activity of open profiles allows us to confirm that this is mostly a testimonial presence, with no personal contributions. The proactivity of the MP as source and direct contact of the message directed to the citizens are not enough motivations to encourage a normal activity as members of the social network.

The range of possibilities is wide: from the wall that only registers passive activities (the new friends that have joined or been accepted) to those profiles offering photos and personal comments about current events. Many times, the network is considered to be a scenario or platform to forward the information published by newspapers on matters of interest that are promoted and centred on the owner of the profile, or a channel shared with the party in which the management of the profile is even delegated and adopts a format and content similar to the other members of the political party.

The fact that 83.72% of MPs don't have profile prevents us from considering the social networks as tools incorporated into their normal activity of political communication. The management of MPs' profiles by their political parties in some cases (or perhaps by unidentified community manager) suggests that the social networks are considered a tool of political marketing that is useful as alternative channel in the flows of information but putting the emphasis on the channel and not on personal content.

The privileging the value of the platform over the message could undermine the effectiveness of the use of the network or limit its application to the group of users supporting the political ideology of the owner of the profile/page. From the perspective of the management of the social network, this is not about creating a personal circle, but about forming a personal group to serve as the first re-transmitter in a chain of network links that enables the dissemination of the message with dynamics that are similar to viral marketing: a user of the list of friends who believes that the message is interesting or important to forward it to his or her friends or believes that through the activity in the wall of the political actor he or she will generate a visible activity for the members of his or her personal network who are not on the politician's network. Dissemination works with a tree branching scheme or the proliferation of circles with intersections in which each circle is delimited by the friends accepted by each user.

In general, there is a wastage of the communicative potential of social networks because a) there is a predominance of passive presences, in which the walls only show links to news; b) there are not frequent updates; c) the use of multimedia is almost inexistent; and d)

communication about personal non-political matters, which would contribute to humanise the figure of the politician, is not taken into consideration.

These four factors suffice to state that the essence of the network is being altered: collective interpersonal communication is abandoned to give way to a communication system managed with similar formats for the members of the party, communication shared with the party or a channel of retransmission of incorporated content and mediated mass communication systems. Moreover, MPs are not taking advantage of the most favourable element in Facebook: the message is proactive, pursues the user, and is displayed on the walls of the 'friends' of each profile.

The little presence on Facebook is in line with the little use of other virtual resources of direct communication with citizens: there are hardly any links to personal blogs or personal email addresses. The virtual activities that are recognised in the Congress's website paint a picture opposed to the definition of proactive political communication in direct and personal areas: of 97 MPs who state online activity, only 78 make reference to a blog, 12 to a website, 9 to their email, and 31 to presence in social networks but always in a second level.

The scale of Commitment 2.0 to measure participation, proactivity and interaction gave a gradually descending result: 71.42% of MPs had zero commitment, 12.28% low commitment; 8.85% medium; 6.28% high, and only 1.14% an absolute and total Commitment 2.0 as users of social networks. The best of readings allows us to indicate that there is a good use of the spaces of multiple and personal intercommunication, such as the networks, in 7 of every 100 members (7.42% with high or excellent Commitment 2.0).

The data about the presence in and use of social networks by MPs do not allow us to assert that the social networks are being used from a position of cyber-activism since there is enough evidence to suggest that this is an strategic and planned use for the dissemination of the content posted on the network to be retransmitted (linked) in other cyberspaces and by other users.

At most we can talk of the existence of a small group of MPs (approximately one in five MPs with presence on Facebook) who use the social networks as a space to gain visibility and exhibit proactive behaviours and generate content and participate interactively with other users; another small group that only seeks to be present in the social networks but with a reactive and passive attitude; and a third and largest group of MPs (three in every five) who ignore the social networks as a communication channel and as a platform to disseminate information.

Moreover, if we accept that transversality and receptivity to new technologies are the basic axes of the new political communication (Caldevila: 2009, 31) it is hard to believe that an attitude of Commitment 2.0 can be adopted in a group of actors who are mostly absent from the virtual networks. And even among those who have a profile or page on Facebook, there are more cases of passive presence that cases of transversal communication and use of multimedia resources.

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7. Notes

[1] Data taken from the 2010 study of *InSites Consulting* (available at http://blog.insites.be/).

[2] Technical details of the study: Universe: Internet users, politicians and citizens over 18 years of age**.** Geographical area: Spain. Sample size: designed: 1,550; conducted: 1.506 (784

politicians + 722 citizens). Collection technique: self-answered online interview. Date of work field: 23 August - 15 September 2010. Sampling error: general data +/- 3.7%.

[3] 69% of the interviewed politicians believed that Obama's Internet marketing model cannot be replicated in Spain and the *report* reads that at the moment using *online* marketing as backbone of any campaign of political communication in Spain would be "a reckless act".

[4] http://www.Facebook.com/advertising/?campaign_id=402047449186 & placement = pf & extra_1 = 0. Facebook's audience, according to Alexa.com, is made up mainly by people aged between 18 and 44 years, mostly females, with secondary or university studies, without children, and connected to the Internet from home or school.

[5] In the CIU group 50% of pages and 50% of profiles were counted.

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