

DOES MEDIA MATTER? VARIATION OF VK AND FACEBOOK DELIBERATIVE CAPACITIES (EVIDENCE FROM DISCUSSIONS ON THE CRIMEA CRISIS)

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Abstract:

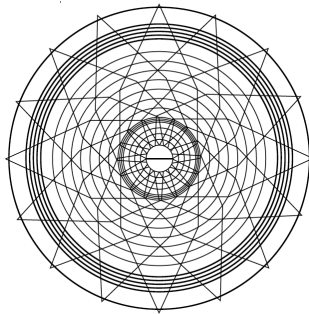
This paper considers political talk online in two similar social networks: Facebook and VK. Due to the proliferation of professionally produced entertainment content in VK, we suppose that users of this network produce more deliberative discussions, while Facebook users are more engaged in online activity. Selecting 23 news posts, which were simultaneously posted in both social networks, we collected 7676 comments. This study has two hypotheses: (1) Facebook users are more participative in online public spaces than VK users and (2) talk in public spaces in VK is more deliberative than in Facebook. While the former was fully proved by the results, the latter was only partially approved. Discussing the results, we state that extending explanatory variables and focusing on causal mechanisms is a good agenda for further research.

Keywords: deliberative democracy, political talk online, Facebook, VK, social media

Introduction

Public participation in issues of common concern is essential for a healthy democracy. This point has been extensively discussed in political theory over recent decades, especially among deliberative democrats (Habermas, 1996; Dryzek, 2000; Bohman, 1996; Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). John Dryzek has called this growing attention a “deliberative turn”. Political action means first of all *interaction* through common use of language. As Arendt noted, the political action to be expressed ultimately requires words, and in addition to “finding the right words at the right moment, quite apart from the information and communication they may convey, is action” (Arendt, 1998, p. 26). This endorsement privileges public talk as a necessary form of political engagement.

There are a variety of forms of discursive participation in political life that become as significant as traditional modes of participation (Delli Carpini, Cook, & Jacobs, 2004). A



growing body of literature has scrutinized political talk and its quality in various circumstances. Experiments in small groups have proved that engagement in opinion exchange, public debates, and discussions under certain conditions enhances political sophistication and political competence (Gastil & Dillard, 1999; Fishkin, 2009; Ryfe, 2002, 2006; Moy & Gastil, 2006; Kim, 2016).

Web 2.0 proliferation put the issue of online political talk on the research agenda. The utopian vision of this issue considers social networks domains for public deliberation and civic engagement that revitalize democracy (Papacharissi, 2014; Shirky, 2008). Providing the decrease of cooperation and communication costs, new technologies enable people to organize and communicate beyond institutional constraints. The dystopian view undermines optimistic claims by emphasizing the dark side of the new communication environment (Morozov, 2011; Sunstein, 2002, 2007). Rather than encouraging public deliberation, communication in social networks seems to be far from the deliberative ideal. Furthermore, virtual public spheres are, in fact, a kind of echo chambers, in which people with similar political views gather, rather than domains for a cooperative search for truth (Hindman, 2009). As Sunstein pointed out, such echo chambers could have a disengaging effect that tends to undermine democracy rather than facilitate it (Sunstein, 2007).

Extant empirical evidences are controversial and provide support for both perspectives. A plethora of studies is dedicated to the quality of online forums, comments on news articles, blogs, and other modes of online communication (Davis, 2005; Papacharissi, 2004; Zhang, Cao, & Tran, 2013; Graham, 2010; Loveland & Popescu, 2011; Coe, Kenski, & Rains, 2014; Santana, 2014; Stiegler & De Jong, 2015). A growing number of studies considers how users communicate with each other in social networks and how their communication is close to or far from deliberative standards (Choi, 2014; Halpern & Gibbs, 2013; Stroud et al., 2015). Focusing predominantly on a selective exposure perspective, current studies highlight how homophily in political views encourages online communication (Himmelboim, McCreery, & Smith, 2013).

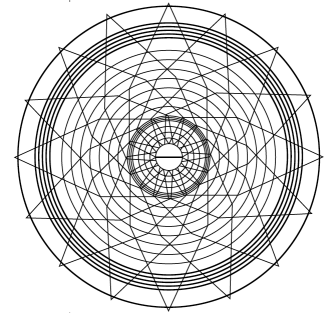
However, there is a lack of comparative studies focusing on similar social networks and emphasizing differences in users' communication. Rarely do studies scrutinizing online political talk on Facebook compare it with talk on other social platforms such as YouTube and Myspace (Maia & Rezende, 2016) or news sites (Hille & Bakker, 2014; Rowe, 2015; Ruiz et al., 2011). Focusing on the anonymity effect, extant comparative studies argue that political talk in social networks is more civil and polite than political talk on other platforms. Nevertheless, other possible technical aspects of social networks could enhance or mitigate online political discussion. To determine features of communication specific to Facebook, we should compare it with a quite similar social network. This study addresses this gap in knowledge and focuses on online political talk in Facebook and VK. We seek to examine the quality of comments in two similar social networks. The Russian social network VK is typically called a clone of Facebook. It contains the same functions and provides users with a similar range of opportunities. How does political talk online differ in two similar social networks? Moreover, what are the explanations for these differences?

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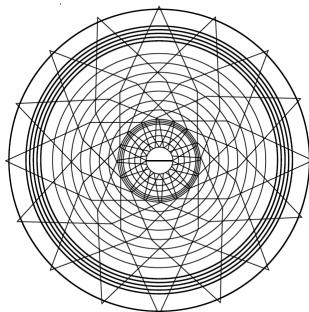
Political Talk Online and Deliberative Democracy

Deliberative democratic theory provides a strong normative framework for empirical investigations. Nevertheless, the very concept of deliberation has become fluid in empirical studies (Steiner, 2012). The concept of deliberation in authentic meaning is devoted to the decision-making process in formal bodies (Thompson, 2008; Manin, 1987). Micro-deliberative framework¹ stresses this authentic meaning of the term and highlights rational and inclusive features of political talk. For instance, Cohen (1997) focused on an ideal deliberation as a free and reasoned discussion among equal parties aimed at arriving at a rational, motivated consensus. According to Benhabib (1996), deliberative procedure must correspond to three criteria: (1) Participation is governed by the norms of equality and symmetry; all have the same chances to initiate speech acts, to question, to interrogate, and to open debate; (2) all have the right to question the assigned topics of conversation; and (3) all have the right to initiate reflexive arguments about the very rules of the discourse procedure and the way in which they are applied or carried out.

Macro-deliberative framework focuses on public opinion rather than decision-making (Hendriks, 2006). According to Dryzek, authentic democracy primarily presupposes intersubjective communication across public discourses, which produces public opinion based on the critical evaluation of preferences (Dryzek, 2000). Considering the circulation of discourses in the public sphere a structural condition for opinion formation, adherents to this approach highlight the role of “weak” public spheres in political life: spontaneous, semi-structured, and unregulated public forums that surround administrative bodies and provide them through the discursive context. Habermas defined them as “the vehicle of public opinion”:

“The opinion-formation uncoupled from decisions is effected in an open and inclusive network of overlapping, subcultural publics having fluid temporal, social, and substantive boundaries. Within a framework guaranteed by constitutional rights, the structures of such a pluralistic public sphere develop more or less spontaneously. The currents of public communication are channeled by mass media and flow through different publics that develop informally inside associations. Taken together, they form a ‘wild’ complex that resists organization as a whole” (Habermas, 1996, p. 307).

The idea of political talk online is closely connected with the concept of weak public spheres (Graham, 2010). A plethora of weak public spheres exists in social networks and provides a domain for opinion exchange between users. Users’ communication in social networks scarcely contains solid argumentative discourse. The very format of elusive chit-chat hardly enacts an argumentative genre and does not presuppose a consensual decision as an outcome of discussion. Therefore, focusing on the logical coherence of talks reduces authentic democratic communication to a non-live format and predictably leads to results predicted by adherents of a cyberpessimistic approach. However, when discussing political issues, users may become more aware about other views and evaluate their own opinions. Thus, good political talk online substantially contributes to a deliberative system (Mansbridge, 1999).



Hypotheses

Facebook and VK are closely similar social networks. As with Facebook, VK began as an exclusive network for university students. While Facebook was created for Harvard University students, VK's target group was students from Saint Petersburg University. As with Facebook, VK enables users to add friends, send messages, post in and read a newsfeed with an opportunity to like it, and share and comment on interesting posts. As with Facebook, VK enables users to control their privacy, restricting or providing access to their content. As of August 2017, VK is the most popular social network in Russia, ranked 1st in a national ranking of web sites, while Facebook is ranked 20th.

According to McLuhan, a medium substantially influences the mode of communication and has an impact on message perception (McLuhan, 1964). Though there are different modes of social media usage, every network is a singular medium that consists of other mediums. As the content of writing is speech or the content of telegraph is print, social networks like Facebook and VK contain such complicated mediums as newsfeed, individual messaging, etc. There is a plethora of explanations for how social networks as a dominant form of media change the world and what social consequences they produce (for instance: Castells, 2009). Nevertheless, every social network is a unique combination of mediums, and even little details could influence their cumulative effects. As Papacharissi (2009) stated, in shaping the private/public balance, certain characteristics of a social network influence users' behaviour online. The very format of a network could encourage or discourage users' communication with each other and public discussion of issues of common concern.

Despite all of their similarities, these two social networks have certain differences. In contrast to Facebook, VK provides users with the opportunity to consume entertainment content: movies, TV shows, music, etc. The presence of professionally produced entertainment content makes VK a "hotter" means of communication than Facebook. According to Marshall McLuhan, "hot" media are those that allow less participation than "cool" media. Provoking the condition of "high definition", the former does not need active participation of a user in constructing the image. As for Facebook, it requires users to participate in different forms of public activity due to the fact that this network is focused on user-generated content.

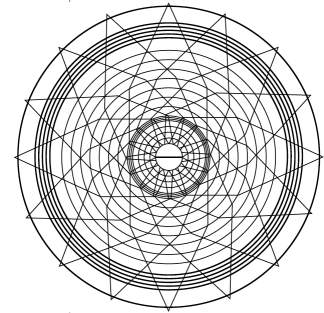
Focusing on public communication makes Facebook vulnerable to the traditional perils of social media. Being required to communicate with other users and consume content generated by others, Facebook users tend to select only those sources of information that are interesting to them. Critical selection of sources leads to network fragmentation on political views, interests, and values and encourages selective exposure. While Facebook engenders homogeneous communities based on shared views, interests, and values, VK generally produces amorphous communities with fewer entrance requirements. Therefore, in contrast to Facebook, VK generates cross-cutting networks with an intersection of different views, interests, and values.

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Fostering certain kinds of communities, a social network has an impact on users' perceptions of opposing views. Diverse political networks encourage political tolerance, providing one side a better understanding of the other side (Mutz, 2006). Both Facebook and VK contain public spaces that provide an intersection of particular views and values. Fostering selective exposure and fragmentation, Facebook undermines the *deliberativeness* of discussions between adherents of different views. In contrast, VK provides more deliberative political talk.

H1: Facebook users are more participative in online public spaces than VK users.

H2: Talks in public spaces in VK are more deliberative than in Facebook

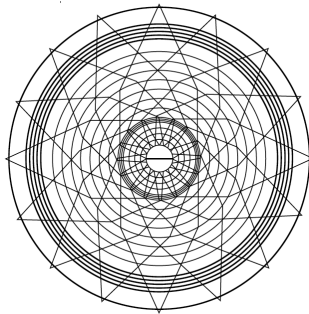
Data and Measurement

Data Description

To scrutinize political talk online, we focused on journalistic Internet-based domains in Facebook and VK (Dahlgren, 2005). These domains provide public spaces with an intersection of various views, interests, and values. Data were gathered from the Crimea crisis discussions on Vedomosti's public pages in Facebook and VK. We chose Vedomosti due to its reputation as an impartial and independent newspaper focused on business news. One of the most popular Russian newspapers, as of March 2014, Vedomosti was ranked 3rd among Russian daily newspapers with a unique audience of 150,000 readers³. As of March 2014, the newspaper had three stakeholders: Sanoma Independent Media, Dow Jones & Co. (an owner of The Wall Street Journal), and Financial Times Group. During the Crimea crisis, Vedomosti did not promote state propaganda discourse and provided unbiased coverage of the topic. Thus, Vedomosti provides good data for assessing the quality of comments in Russian circumstances. As of March 2014, Vedomosti's public page had more than 700,000 subscribers on Facebook and more than 600,000 subscribers on VK.

The Crimea crisis was a prominent topic that attracted the attention of the majority of Russians, including apathetic and previously disengaged people. Being unexpected for both the international community and Russian citizens, the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian Federation was happening in conditions of high uncertainty, which encouraged people to engage in discussion on public forums to recognize ongoing events. Moreover, the topic's complexity provided conflictual discussion, which is appropriate for assessing the quality of online political talk.

The Crimea crisis was framed as political tensions on the political status of the Crimean Peninsula from 27 February 2014 to 18 March 2014. On 27 February 2014, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea announced a referendum on the political status of the peninsula. The referendum occurred on 16 March 2014, and on 18 March 2014, the treaty of incorporation into the Russian Federation was signed. During this period, 23 news posts were simultaneously published on Facebook and VK. In total, 7676 comments were collected. We present full description of the data in Appendix 1.



Measurement

To test the first hypothesis, we calculated the means of likes, shares, and comments for each news post in both social networks. To test the second hypothesis, comments were coded by two coders, who were instructed for 10 hours¹. We also collected data on the type of comment (reply to a previous comment or reply to a news post). Every comment was coded based on the following variables:

Relevance – the correspondence of a comment to an article topic (coded as 1) or a discussion context (coded as 2). Comments that did not match any of them were coded as irrelevant (0). Comments that contained only hyperlinks with no further information from the user also were coded as irrelevant. If a comment matched both conditions (a topic and a context of discussion), it was coded as 2. To run a regression analysis, we transformed this variable into dummy: 0 – irrelevant, 1 – relevant.

Agreement – a comment contains an explicitly or implicitly expressed agreement with the statements of other users. The presence of agreement encourages an affinity between different users and enhances rational evaluation of a user's argumentation (Stromer-Galley & Muhlberger, 2009).

Disagreement – a comment contains an explicitly or implicitly expressed disagreement with the statements of other users. The presence of disagreement is a crucial condition for deliberation, which needs clashes of various points of view and diverse perspectives to be fruitful and avoid cognitive errors and biases (Bohman, 2006, 2007). Moreover, reaction to disagreement manifests users' attitudes towards other opinions and willingness to achieve common understanding.

Genuine question – a question that is directed to seek more information or clarify other users' opinions (Stromer-Galley, 2007). Distinguishing them from rhetorical questions, we tried to grasp an orientation toward a common consensus and a willingness to understand other positions.

Argumentation type – this variable describes an argumentation repertoire of users. During the pilot study, we revealed two types of argumentation: narrative and reasons. If a comment did not contain both an expression of the user's point of view and arguments, we coded it as 0. If a comment contained only an expression of the user's position, it was coded as 1. Coders recorded a comment as 2 if it contained evidence from personal experience or any other narrative explanation. The strongest type of argumentation, which was coded as 3, contained solid reasons or verifiable evidence, provided by hyperlinks to open sources.

Impoliteness – non-correspondence of a comment to norms of polite communication. A comment was coded as impolite if it contained at least one of the following features: (1) pejorative speech, (2) name-calling, (3) sarcasm, (4) accusation of other users, or (5) grotesque.

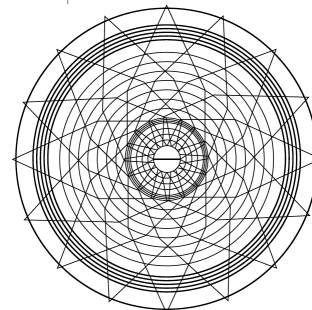
Incivility – non-correspondence of a comment to normative criteria of civil talk and democratic discourse. Based on previous research, we collected the following criteria

¹ The author expresses his deepest gratitude to Konstantin Koryagin and Artyom Semenov.

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of uncivil talk: (1) threat to democracy or individual rights, (2) ideologically extremist speech, (3) racial, gender, or ethnic stereotypes.

We also included two control variables—*topic* and *sex*—and collected data on replies. The role of topics in encouraging users' interaction was corroborated by Boczkowski & Mitchelstein (2012). During the pilot study, we revealed the topics that were discussed in comment sections in both social networks: (1) politics, (2) history and culture, (3) economics, (4) media coverage of the Crimea crisis, and (5) Vedomosti as a mass media. Coders provided the data with a high level of intercoder reliability (Krippendorff's alpha: 0.72–0.93). To grasp the effect of an article post, we used a mixed effects logistic regression for dummy dependent variables. For models with an argumentation type, we used ordinal logistic regression.

Results

H1 posited that Facebook users were more publicly active than VK users. Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the numbers of likes, shares, and comments in both social networks. Facebook users generally produced more likes, shares, and comments than VK users (Figures 1, 2, 3). There is a variance in the distribution of likes, shares, and comments for particular news posts between the two social networks. VK users stressed news posts that were highlighted by the general public sphere, while Facebook users selected other news and developed their own informational agenda. For instance, VK users provided a lot of feedback to the article N°23, which concerned the accession of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation, while Facebook users emphasized topics that were secondary for state-controlled mass media.

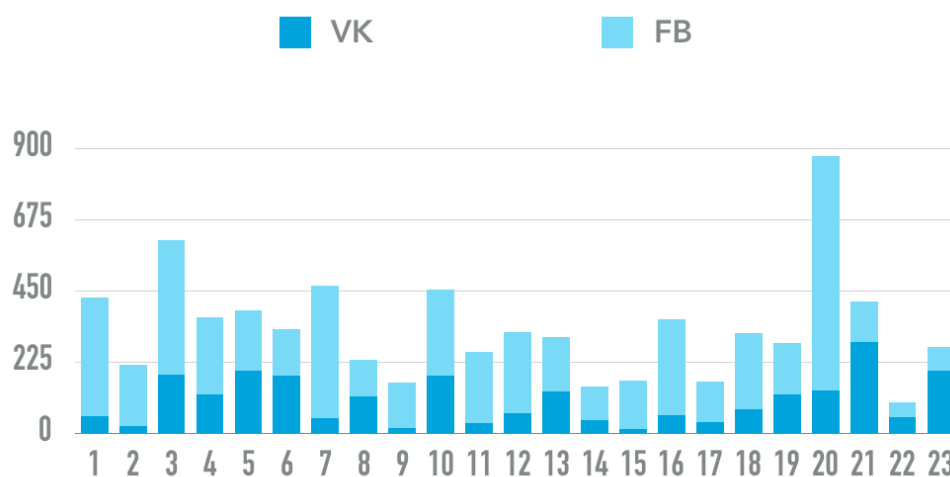
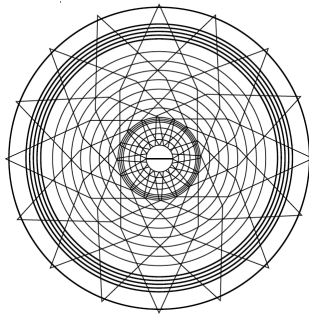


Figure 1. Number of comments in VK and Facebook per article



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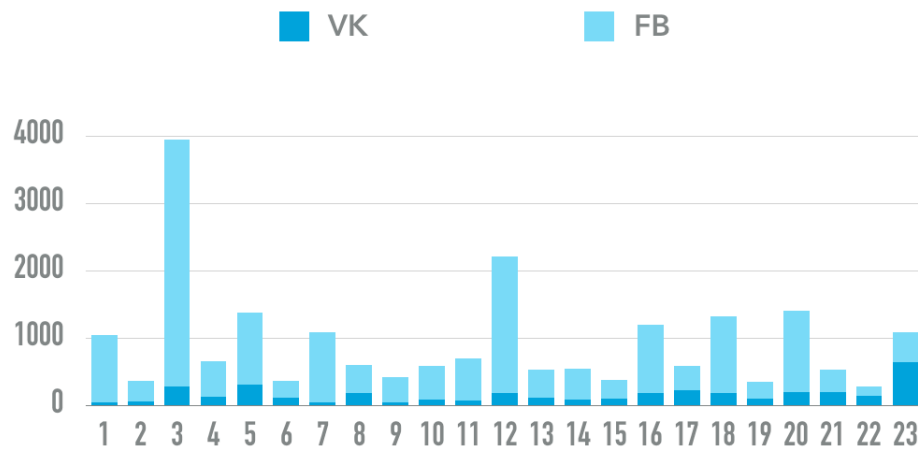


Figure 2. Number of likes in VK and Facebook per article

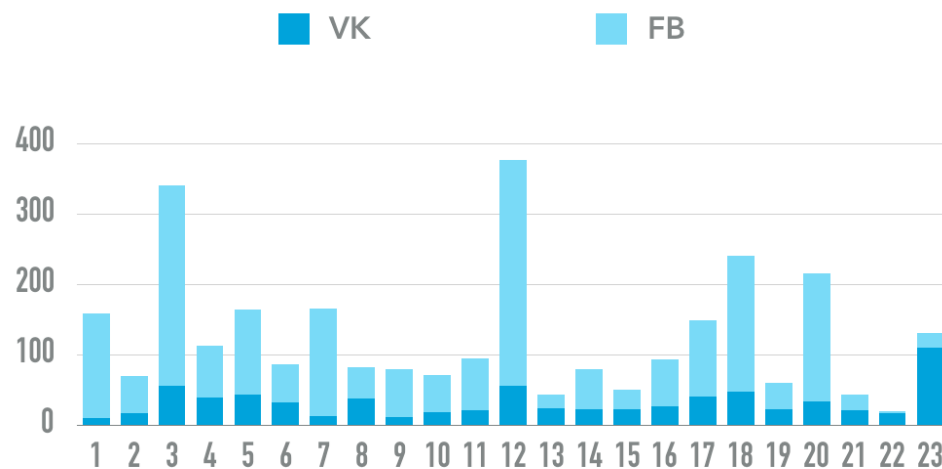


Figure 3. Number of shares in VK and Facebook per article

VK users were more engaged in communication with each other: 66.74% of comments in VK were replies to other users, while the number of replies in Facebook was 27.46% (Table 3). The latter was reflected in the distribution of relevant comments. The majority of Facebook comments were relevant to an article topic (61.72%), while the majority of VK comments were relevant to a discussion context (63.69%), chi-square 1148.649, p-value < 0.01. Thus, Facebook users tended to comment on articles and provide feedback to news posts, while VK users tended to communicate with each other, articulating their own agenda in comment sections.

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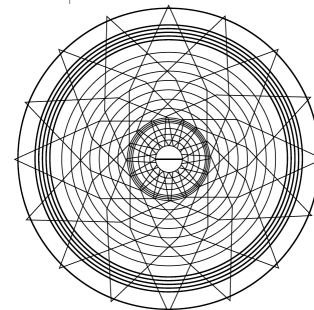


Table 1
Relevance: Cross-tabulation

	Facebook	VK
Irrelevant	8.24%	16.30%
Relevant to article topic	61.72%	20.01%
Relevant to users' discussion	30.04%	63.69%

H2 posited that political talk in VK was closer to the criteria of deliberative discourse. We revealed that discussions in both social networks were far from the normative claims of deliberative democracy. The majority of comments were unreasoned and did not contain genuine questions. At the same time, the majority of comments did not contain any form of impoliteness or incivility. Only 13.64% of Facebook and 13.13% of VK comments were coded as impolite. Incivility happened more often: 20.16% of Facebook and 17.80% of VK comments were uncivil (Table 3).

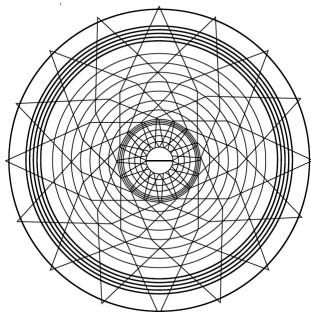
Table 2
Argumentation type: Cross-tabulation

	Facebook	VK
No argumentation	35.06%	45.64%
User position expressed	47.41%	34.93%
Position justified by narrative	11.41%	14.46%
Position justified by reason	6.12%	4.96%

In general, there were fewer irrelevant and unreasoned comments in Facebook than in VK. VK discussions contained twice the irrelevant comments (8.24% - Facebook, 16.30% - VK, Table 1). Of the VK comments, 45.64% did not contain any type of argumentation, while there were 35.06% of that kind of comments in Facebook (Table 2). The most significant difference between the two social networks was in the quantity of comments that contained only the user's position on the problem issue: 47.41% - Facebook, 34.93% - VK (Table 2). The rest of the comments were characterized by the dominance of the narrative type of argumentation in both social networks. Nevertheless, comments in Facebook more often contained well-reasoned comments (6.12% - Facebook, 4.96% - VK, Table 2).

Table 3
Dummy variables: Cross-tabulation

	Facebook	VK	Chi-square
Reply (1)	27.46%	66.74%	1062.506 (p < 0.01)
Agreement (1)	6.82%	5.75%	3.11
Disagreement (1)	22.08%	25.30%	9.662 (p < 0.01)



Genuine question (1)	2.44%	4.88%	31,457 ($p < 0.01$)
Impoliteness (1)	13.64%	13.13%	0.373
Incivility (1)	20.16%	17.80%	5.888 ($p < 0.05$)
Disagreement * Genuine question (1)	0.42%	0.58%	0.981
Disagreement * Impoliteness (1)	4.96%	5.46%	0.834
Sex (1)	71.57%	71.60%	0.001

VK's comments were more civil and more often contained genuine questions than Facebook's comments. The difference in incivility between the two social networks was significant, with a p-value less than 0.05 (Table 3). Of the VK comments, 4.88% contained genuine questions, while only 2.44% of the Facebook comments were characterized by its presence (p-value less than 0.01).

Despite the fact that VK users more often expressed disagreement than Facebook users, there was no significant relationship between comments that contained disagreement and social network. We also calculated the quantity of the comments that were characterized by the intersection of, first, disagreement and impoliteness and, second, disagreement and a genuine question. Both disagreement and genuine questions were contained in 0.42% of Facebook and 0.58% of VK comments, while both disagreement and incivility were found in 4.96% of Facebook and 5.46% of VK comments. There were no significant differences between social network in the quantity of comments containing impoliteness with disagreement and genuine question with disagreement. In other words, VK and Facebook users reacted to disagreement in a similar way.

Mixed effect logistic regression (models 1-4) and ordinal logistic regression (model 5) confirmed the significance of some of the revealed relationships. Controlling for sex and topic, we revealed that social network is a significant predictor for genuine question, relevance, and argumentation type (Table 4). The results show that Facebook increases the probability of better-reasoned (p-value less than 0.05) and relevant (p-value less than 0.001) comments, while VK significantly increases the probability of a genuine question (p-value less than 0.001).

Despite the fact that the chi-square test showed a relationship between incivility and social network, it loses its significance if sex and topic are included in the model. All defined topics decrease the probability of incivility, while male gender increases it. Thus, VK is not a significant predictor for incivility.

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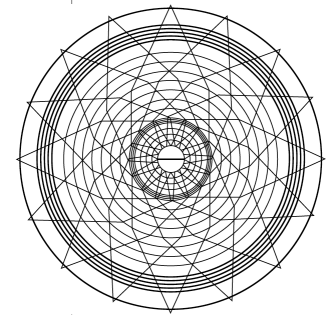


Table 4
Comments quality determinants

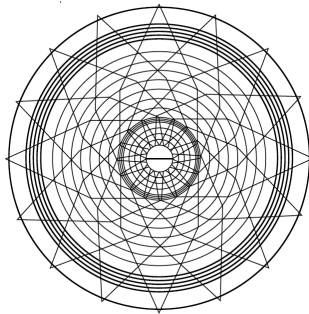
	Model 1	Model 1	Model 2	Model 2	Model 3	Model 3	Model 4	Model 4	Model 5	Model 5
	Impoliteness COEF(SE)	Impoliteness ODDS(SE)	Incivility COEF(SE)	Incivility ODDS(SE)	Genuine question COEF(SE)	Genuine question ODDS(SE)	Relevance COEF(SE)	Relevance ODDS(SE)	Argumentation type COEF(SE)	Argumentation type ODDS(SE)
Social Network (FB)	-.0151418 (.0854982)	.9849722 (0.0842134)	-.1354264 (.0727972)	.8733434 .063577	-.7935936 (.1412756)***	.4522168 (.0638872)	.4180544 (.0966225)***	1.519003 (.1467699)	.1068419 (.0486972)*	1.112758 (.0541882)
Topic (politics)	-.7161128 (.8409641)	.4886481 (.4109355)	-2.362786 (.7061791)**	.0941576 .0664921	3.114181 (1.005582)**	22.51498 (22.64066)	2.074097 (.8159286)*	7.95736 (6.492637)	-.3470928 (.6408394)	.7067397 (.4529067)
Topic (history and culture)	-.1600998 (.8445276)	.8520588 (.7195872)	-2.606972 (.7105558)***	.0737576 .0524089	2.918475 (1.018306)***	18.51303 (18.85193)	1.220518 (.8194508)	3.388942 (2.777072)	-.9317362 (.6432536)	.3938693 (.2533578)
Topic (economics)	-.9487099 (.8566578)	.3872403 (.3317324)	-3.379087 (.7217891)***	.0340785 .0245975	3.35532 (1.030175)**	28.65476 (29.51941)	2.732153 (.8552823)***	15.36593 (13.14221)	.0802291 (.6456151)	1.083535 (.6995467)
Topic (mass media)	-.1987796 (.8623524)	.8197305 (.7068965)	-2.959399 (.7354434)***	.05185 .0381328	2.450509 (1.12525)*	11.59424 (13.04642)	1.981452 (.8705395)*	7.25327 (6.314258)	-.2922615 (.6529167)	.7465733 (.4874501)
Topic (Vedomosti)	-.1383791 (.8499984)	.8707685 (.7401518)	-3.081034 (.7200483)***	.0459118 .0330587	1.67274 (1.1267)	5.326742 (6.00164)	3.20052 (.892821)***	24.54529 (21.91455)	-.5242384 (.6454502)	.5920061 (.3821104)
Sex (male)	.3509689 (.0837018) ***	1.420443 (.1188937)	.3046971 (.0708779)***	1.356214 .0961256	.13676 (.1522567)	1.146553 (.1745703)	-.2860605 (.1008954)**	.7512172 (.0757944)	-.0242081 (.0485456)	.9760826 (.0473845)
Cons	-1.725515 (.8502758)*	.1780813 (.1514182)	.944747 .7137814	2.572163 1.835962	-6.079752 (1.014499)***	.0022887 (.0023219)	.7756032 (.8311541)	2.171902 (1.805185)		
Article variance	.3408281 (.1120597)	.3408281 (.1120597)	.261133 .0857091	.261133 .0857091	.1665873 (.076835)	.1665873 (.076835)	.662254 (.2141691)	.662254 (.2141691)		

Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, we tested two hypotheses. First, we supposed that Facebook users are more engaged in various forms of online activity than VK users. Second, we supposed that VK users produce more deliberative political talk than Facebook users. Both hypotheses were proved by the results.

Facebook users are more engaged in public activity by providing feedback to news posts, sharing news posts with their subscribers, and producing comments. Facebooks' users contribute to user-generated content, while VK users contribute less to user-generated content. Based on this evidence, we maintain that Facebook users are generally more engaged in news consumption than VK users. This feature makes Facebook more focused on social and political agendas than VK. Deliberative democrats highlight the importance of this focus for democratic communication: To participate in political talk online, people should be encouraged by the environment. The presence of entertainment content makes VK vulnerable to political disinterest and apathy, which is commonly considered a peril of mass media rather than social media.

Our results show that there is a lack of correspondence between political talk online in both social networks and normative claims of deliberative democracy. Nevertheless, we revealed significant differences between social networks. Hypothesis 2 provided equivocal results. Discussions in VK contained genuine questions more often and were characterized by the dominance of between-users communication over commenting on news posts, while Facebook users more often commented on articles rather than



communicated with each other. Discussions in Facebook were more argumentative and relevant than in VK. All of these criteria are commonly recognized as crucial conditions of good political talk online. Our findings contribute to the literature on the quality of online political talk (Tsaliki, 2002; Coe, Kenski, & Rains, 2014; Vergeer & Hermans, 2008, Stromer-Galley, 2002; Graham, 2010; Wright, 2012).

Political talk in VK and Facebook particularly corresponds to Mutz's idea of the incompatibility of the deliberative (at least in Mutz's sense of this word) and participatory effects of social networks. Communication between those with substantial differences simultaneously fosters political talk oriented on mutual understanding between adherents of different views and undermines a common identity and political participation. In contrast, with a lack of tolerance for opposite views, like-minded communities are the best domains for political activism and collective actions. Like-minded people are more likely to encourage each other in collective actions, strengthen common knowledge, and promote the necessary enthusiasm than people with different views. The correlation between the use of Facebook, participation in offline collective actions in Russia, and the absence of such a correlation in the case of VK has been corroborated in extant studies (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2015; White & McAllister, 2014). Therefore, providing the background for political mobilization and collective actions, Facebook is characterized by a lack of online political talk between adherents of opposite views. Further studies on interrelation between online activity and political talk online should focus on the issue of political knowledge.

There are certain limitations to our study. Our analysis did not include extensive socio-demographic information on users in both social networks (education, geography, age, etc.). Argumentative speech is more predictable among well-educated and adult users than among non- or poorly educated teenagers. Further research on this topic should consider these variables.

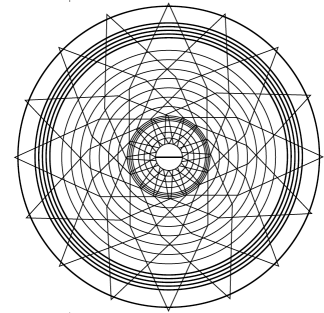
Though both hypotheses are corroborated by the results, we cannot confirm a causal relationship between the type of prevailing content (user-generated content versus professionally produced entertainment content), on one hand, and public activity and quality of political talk, on the other. Further research should focus on causal inference and complement our results with explanations based on particular technical details of social networks. For instance, comment sections on Facebook have a two-level format, while comment sections in VK do not differentiate between replies to news posts and replies to other users. This technical detail can significantly shape the mode of communication in comment sections.

Data were gathered from the journalistic Internet-based domain on a particular topic: the Crimea crisis. Connecting users with different views in one space, journalistic Internet-based domains enabled us to grasp the consequences of selective exposure and fragmentation for the deliberativeness of online political talk. Due to the complexity of the topic, the Crimea crisis provided a conflictual character of discussions and attracted a wide range of users, enabling us to overcome the prior engagement bias. Despite the appropriateness of the collected data for our purposes, scrutinizing political talk in other contexts is a good way to test the reliability of the results.

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Acknowledgement: The publication was prepared within the framework of the Academic Fund Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2019 (grant N°19-04-055) and by the Russian Academic Excellence Project “5-100”. The author expresses his deepest gratitude to Konstantin Koryagin and Artyom Semenov.

Notes

1. Macro and micro approaches to deliberative democracy from (Hendriks, 2006)
2. Top Sites in Russia. URL: <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/RU>
3. TNS Global, Mediascope. URL: http://www.tns-global.ru/services/media/media-audience/press/information/ratings/?arrFilter_pf%5BCITY%5D=VIRTUAL_ID&arrFilter_pf%5BDATE%5D=%D0%9C%D0%B0%D1%80%D1%82+%E2%80%93+%D0%98%D1%8E%D0%B%D1%8C+2014&arrFilter_pf%5BTYPE%5D%5B%5D=42488&set_filter=%D0%A1%D1%84%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%8C&set_filter=Y#

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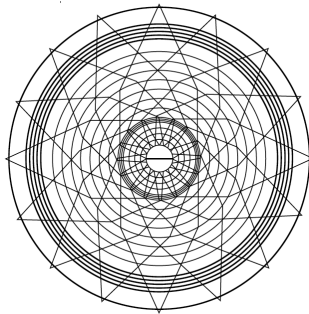
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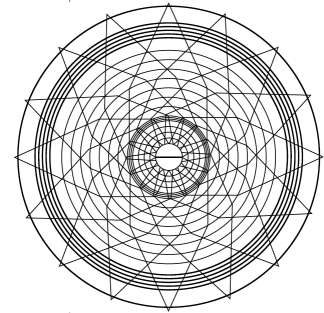
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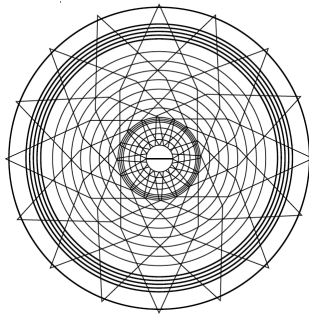
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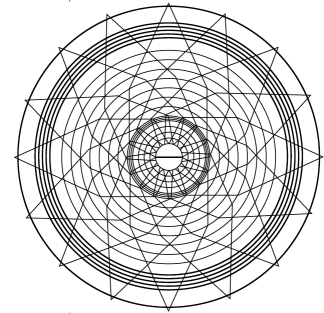
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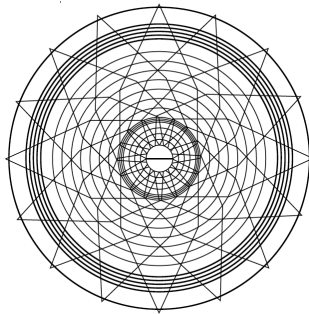
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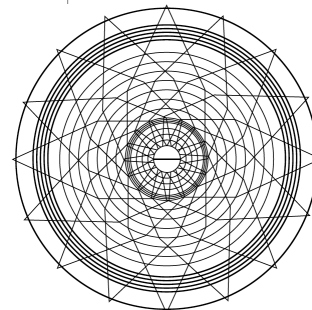
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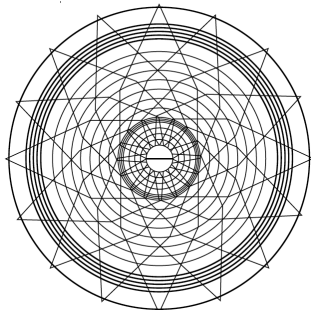
Deliberative Capacities (evidence from Discussions on the Crimea Crisis)



Appendix 1. Descriptive statistics of the data: titles and dates

Nº	Title (Russian)	Title (English)	Date
1	От редакции: Зигзаги линии партии	Editorial: Zigzags of party line	28.02.2014
2	Мизулина предлагает упростить присоединение к России части иностранного государства	Mizullina suggests to simplify the proceure of foreign territories annexation	28.02.2014
3	Янукович: Крым должен остаться украинским	Yanukovych: Crimea should be Ukrainian	28.02.2014
4	Российские военные достигнут своих целей в Крыму бескровно	Russian military forces will achieve their goals in Crimea without bloodshed	03.03.2014
5	От редакции: Победа над разумом, экономикой и развитием	Editorial: Victory over reason, economy and development	03.03.2014
6	Экономисты оценили последствия возможных западных санкций для России	Economists have evaluated the consequences of probable Western sanctions for Russia	03.03.2014
7	Что, если Владимир Путин действительно утратил «контакт с реальностью»?	Whether Vladimir Putin has really lost a contact with reality?	04.03.2014
8	Конфликт не с Украиной, а с Западом	Conflict with the West, but not with Ukraine	04.03.2014
9	Спецпосланник ООН покидает Крым после задержания	UN delegate leaves Crimea after his arrest	05.03.2014
10	Рада Крыма проголосовала за присоединение к России, референдум пройдет 16 марта	Crimean Rada voted for annexation to Russia	06.03.2014
11	США вводят санкции в отношении чиновников, лиц и организаций, дестабилизирующих ситуацию на Украине	US imposes sanctions against public officials and organizations, who destabilize situation in Ukraine	06.03.2014
12	Киссинджер: Украина должна быть мостом между Россией и Западом	Kissinger: Ukraine should be a bridge between Russia and the West	07.03.2014

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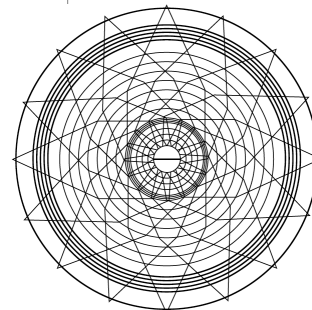
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13	Госдума обещала поддержать присоединение Крыма к России	Duma promised to support the annexation of Crimea	07.03.2014
14	Двойственная стратегия: позиция Китая по Украине	Ambivalent strategy: Chinese position on Ukrainian crisis	11.03.2014
15	Столкновение армий России и Украины маловероятно	Military clash between Russia and Ukraine is hardly probable	11.03.2014
16	Янукович не ответил на вопросы журналистов	Yanukovych did not answer on journalists' questions	11.03.2014
17	Бессрочное базирование Черноморского флота — важная цель Путина в Крыму	Termless Black Sea Fleet location is the important Putin's goal in Crimea	12.03.2014
18	Крым — троянский дар российскому обывателю	Crimea is a a Trojan horse to Russian ordinaries	12.03.2014
19	Выбор Крыма, выбор России	Choice of Crimea, choice of Russia	13.03.2014
20	Меркель: Россия действует на Украине «по закону джунглей»	Merkel: Russia adopts «law of the jungle» in Ukraine	13.03.2014
21	Как жители Крыма голосовали за вхождение в состав России	How Crimeans voted for affiliation with Russia?	16.03.2014
22	Власти Крыма: За присоединение к России проголосовали 96,77% крымчан	Authorities of Crimea: 96,77% of Crimeans voted for affiliation with Russia	17.03.2014
23	Крым и Севастополь подписали договор о вхождении в состав России	Crimea and Sevastopol signed the treaty of accession to Russian Federation	18.03.2014

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ИМЕЮТ ЛИ ЗНАЧЕНИЕ МЕДИА? ДЕЛИБЕРАТИВНЫЕ ВОЗМОЖНОСТИ СОЦИАЛЬНЫХ СЕТЕЙ VK И FACEBOOK (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ОБСУЖДЕНИЙ КРЫМСКОГО КРИЗИСА)

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Аннотация:

Предметом статьи является качество политического разговора в двух социальных сетях – Facebook и VK. В связи с распространением в последней профессионального развлекательного контента в исследовании выдвигается гипотеза о том, что пользователи VK в больше мере склонны к делиберативному стилю обсуждения, в то время как пользователи Facebook отличаются большим уровнем онлайн-вовлеченности. Для проверки этих гипотез были отобраны 23 одинаковых новостных поста, которые публиковались одновременно в пабликах газеты Ведомости в социальных сетях Facebook и VK в период Крымского кризиса. В обеих социальных сетях под постами было оставлено в общей сложности 7676 комментариев. Гипотеза о большем уровне активности в социальной сети Facebook по сравнению с социальной сетью VK нашла свое подтверждение в исследовании. Гипотеза о большем уровне делиберативности обсуждений в социальной сети VK была подтверждена частично.

Ключевые слова: делиберативная демократия, политический разговор в режиме онлайн, Facebook, VK, социальные медиа