

Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Social Media and Government

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The use of social media has been growing rapidly and globally. Governments at all levels have been using social network sites, micro-blogs, and photo and video-sharing sites among other social software for outreach and interaction with citizens and organizations and for communication with other government agencies. Citizens, businesses and voluntary associations have been using social media to exchange information, express opinions, argue points of view and collaborate on problem solving in neighborhoods, cities, and regions across the world.

The growing use of social media has created new disruptions and opportunities, such as, changes in regulations and policies, improved situation awareness, diffusion of information as well as misinformation, and broader community involvement. The staggering number and diversity of messages, topics, users and user-generated content makes it difficult to make sense of the content, not only on a day-to-day basis, but over time or during critical events, such as severe weather, or natural and manmade disasters.

In this Special Issue on Social Media and Government, we present theory, research and practice related to these disruptions and opportunities. The five papers in this special issue address a range of topics on the use and impact of social media as it relates to government and governance. They present theoretical models, analyses, metrics, and case studies that advance research in the fields of digital government, public administration, and social and political participation.

Authors Mohammed Aladalah, Yen Cheung and Vincent Lee express disappointment in Gov2.0, noting that it has not lived up to expectations nor has it been successful in engaging citizens. In their paper, 'Towards a Model for Engaging Citizens via Gov2.0 to Meet Evolving Public Value' the authors argue that governments need to reassess their engagement models via Gov2.0 in order to achieve a higher level of public value. The authors use a co-creation lens to suggest that citizen participation and satisfaction can help to enhance public value. The authors propose a validated research model and multiple measures that link citizen-government integration with participation and satisfaction in order to achieve public value. They propose a research model that describes how public value is enhanced via Gov2.0, using the concepts of co-creation and synergistic integration. Their findings identify 'willingness to co-create public value' as a first order construct for the synergistic integration of Gov2.0. In future work, they will evaluate the synergistic integration of Gov2.0 with a specific platform.

Maria Wimmer and Sabrina Scherer build on ideas of co-creation and co-production and offer web based platform architecture to incorporate Gov 2.0. In their theoretical contribution, 'Supporting Communities through Social Government in Co-creation and Co-production of Public Services', the authors review concepts of co-creation and co-production of public services and introduce the concept of the Social Government (SocialGov). In this vision, citizens and businesses collaborate and take greater responsibility for public services in their local communities. They investigate five cases of public service delivery to identify ways that co-creation and co-production might overcome challenges

and leverage the potential of community engagement, open governance and social technology. To incorporate the capabilities and features of the SocialGov concept, the authors have developed a SocialGov platform. This website with module-based architecture integrates social technology, collaboration tools, open data and open service interfaces. The SocialGov concept contributes to our knowledge and understanding of the slowly and unevenly growing shift from traditional authoritative public service provisioning to co-creative government and an open and collaborative model of public service delivery.

In ‘Political Ideology and municipal size as incentives for the implementation and governance models of Web 2.0 in providing public services’ Manuel Pedro Rodriguez Bolivar and Laura Alcaide Muñoz also focus on citizen co-production of public services and information. They identify perceptions of policy makers in local governments in Spain regarding the use of Web 2.0 and social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and image-sharing websites. They test whether political ideology (i.e., conservative versus liberal-learning administrations) and municipal size seems to influence local government policy makers’ perceptions of Web 2.0 use. Using responses to survey questionnaires from 46 of the 148 large municipalities (>50,000 inhabitants) in Spain (comprising 50% of the total population), the authors analyze government representatives’ perceptions of the desirable level of control by government and of collaboration from the public using Web 2.0 and social media in the delivery of public services. The authors are interested in the change of roles these technologies may provoke in interactions between governments and local stakeholders. However, the study finds that most governments, regardless of political leanings prefer a highly bureaucratic, executive role for government in the generation and management of content and services. Furthermore, the largest municipalities are the least likely to favor a co-production role for citizens and other local stakeholders in the kind of content that Web 2.0 and social media afford. To the extent that governments do use these technologies it is primarily to improve transparency in public services.

Rodrigo Sandoval-Almazan, David Valle-Cruz and Andrea Kavanaugh examine Twitter and Facebook adoption and use among all thirty-two Mexican state governments over a five-year period (2010-2015) in “The Diffusion of Social Media in State Governments in Mexico”. They find important differences, with only one local government in the sample being classified as an innovator, and four as early adopters, eleven as early majority, eleven as late majority, and five as laggards. The authors examine some of the socio-economic data for each of the thirty-two states, and find that there are some patterns consistent with innovation diffusion theory, such as, states with higher education and income, as well as percentage of households with personal computers and access to Social Network Sites, such as Facebook, tend to be earlier adopters. The sole state categorized as an innovator, Nuevo Leon, also has low a rate of illiteracy and relatively high percentage contribution to national Gross Domestic Product. Some of these patterns are inconsistent, however, and may be explained by combination of other factors, including regional location.

Taking the perspective of citizens regarding government use of social media, Nilay Yavuz, Naci Karkin, Ismet Parlak, and Ozlem Ozdesim Subay examine how and why politicians used Twitter during the 2013 protests in Gezi Park in Istanbul, Turkey, in ‘Political Discourse Strategies Used in Twitter during Gezi Park Protests: A Comparison of Two Rival Political Parties in Turkey’. The authors use critical discourse analysis to interpret expressions of ideology in a social interaction process and to identify the discourse strategies used by top-level politicians of the party in power and the main opposition party. Their results show that the most frequently used strategy by both parties was actor descriptions and categorization. The main opposition party politicians used burden strategy and lexicalization/metaphor strategy significantly more than the politicians of the party in power. The authors also discuss the possible impact of Twitter use on the political outcomes.

These selected papers provide an important set of perspectives on some of the current theoretical approaches, empirical studies and practical experiences regarding social media and government. Collectively, they contribute to knowledge and understanding of these fast-moving research areas and offer useful directions for future work. All the papers underwent a rigorous peer review as part of

the 2016 Digital Government research conference (Shanghai, China, June 2016). For the conference, these papers were carefully selected following a comprehensive, double-blind peer review process performed by members of the conference program committee. Following the conference, each paper was revised and updated for the special issue and reviewed again by the guest editors, with the exception of the revision of their own paper (with David Valle-Cruz) that was double-blind reviewed by members of the IJPADA editorial board.

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