Challenges to government use of social media

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ABSTRACT

The use of different kinds of social media by government has been steadily increasing over the last decade. National, regional and local governments often employ social media to communicate and interact with citizens, organizations and/or other government agencies. However, as many authors highlight, the use of social media by government has many challenges, barriers and issues which undermine governments' actual use of social media. We argue, however, that prior research has to some extent overlooked the nature of challenges, in so far as it does not fully address differences between them and other elements, such as risks. This has resulted in a debate on challenges that includes both general barriers and risks of social media use by governments which, as a consequence, does not allow for consideration of the different actions that are needed to counter challenges and risks.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Computing in government → Computers in other domains;** E-government; • **Collaborative and social computing systems and tool** → Social networking sites

KEYWORDS

Social media challenges, e-government, citizen engagement, government challenges, citizen-government interaction.

PANEL DESCRIPTION

The use of different kinds of social media by government has been steadily increasing over the last decade. National, regional and local governments often employ social media to communicate and interact with citizens, organizations and/or other government agencies. However, the use of social media by government has many challenges, barriers and issues which undermine governments' actual use of social media. Scholars have discussed and attempted categorizations of challenges based on different approaches (e.g. case studies, panel studies, surveys, focus group interviews) [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]. Consolidated categories of challenges include organizational, contextual, legal, data, and technology challenges [6, 7, 8]. We argue, however, that prior research has to some extent overlooked the nature of challenges, in so far as it does not fully address differences between them and other elements, such as risks. This has resulted in a debate on challenges that includes both general barriers and risks of social media use by governments which, as a consequence, does not allow for consideration of the different actions that are needed to counter challenges and risks.

This panel intends to further the discussion which will develop in the context of Track 1 "Social Media and Government" chaired by Andrea Kavanaugh, Rodrigo Sandoval and Jolien Ubacht. The aim is to investigate in more depth the nature of the challenges faced by government organizations, if and why it may be essential to determine their nature, the moment at which they arise and are faced, and how they are different from other barriers to effective use of social media, such as risks. The panel discussion is intended to help researchers to identify and government practitioners to deploy measures and actions that enable governments (especially at the local level where interaction with citizens is higher) to use social media for communication and citizen-interaction purposes. Measures and actions which translate into requirements on the part of government may prove to be essential to address upfront the challenges they are likely to face.

Panel Format – 1.5 hours

- Short presentations by invited speakers (10 minutes). Followed by:
- Roundtable with moderated discussion among invited speakers (Discussant joins the table, comments on presentations, poses questions, and fuels discussion).
- As the discussion develops, the audience can pose questions too and potentially more scholars can join the roundtable.

Speakers and Titles of presentations

Dr. Andrea Kavanaugh - Governments and Citizens Making Sense of Big Data in the Era of Fake News.

Dr. Ines Mergel - Social Media as Data in Public Administration.

Dr. Thomas Bryer - Negotiating the Space between Manipulation and Empowerment: Updating Arnstein's Ladder of Participation for Social Media Engagements.

Dr. Enzo Falco - A Typology of Government Challenges to two-way Social Media Communication with Citizens.

SPEAKERS' BIOS

Andrea Kavanaugh: A Fulbright scholar and Cunningham Fellow, Andrea Kavanaugh is Senior Research Scientist and Associate Director of the interdisciplinary research Center for Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. Her research lies in the areas of digital government, social computing and communication behavior and effects. Dr. Kavanaugh leads research on the use and social impact of information and communication technology funded primarily by the National Science Foundation. Prior to joining the HCI Center in 2002, Dr. Kavanaugh served as Director of Research for the community computer network known as the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) from its inception in 1993. She holds an MA from the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania, and a PhD in Environmental Design and Planning (with a focus on the telecommunications sector) from Virginia Tech. She served on the Board of the International Telecommunications Society (2002-08) and currently serves as Treasurer (formerly Secretary) on the Board of the Digital Government Society (DGS). More detail at http://www.cs.vt.edu/user/kavanaugh.

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Ines Mergel: Full professor of public administration at the University of Konstanz, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Germany. Before joining the University of Konstanz, she served as Associate Professor at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, USA. Professor Mergel holds a DBA degree from the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. Her research focuses on digital innovation in the public sector, including social media, open innovation, and digital transformation of public services. Her research was published in leading public administration journals, such as Government Information Quarterly, Public Administration Review, or Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory.

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Thomas Bryer: Professor in the School of Public Administration Doctoral Program in Public Affairs at the University of Central Florida. He is also visiting professor at Kaunas University of Technology in Lithuania and in the Institute for Public Policy and Professional Practice at Edge Hill University in England. He has published four books, including two most recently: Social Media for Government: Theory and Practice (Routledge, 2016) and Poor Participation: Fighting the Wars on Poverty and Impoverished Citizenship (Lexington Books, 2018). His research focuses on citizen participation and collaborative governance, including the use of emergent technologies as tools of engagement.

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Enzo Falco: Post-doc research fellow in smart governance and citizen engagement at the Department OTB – Research for the Built Environment, TU Delft. He holds a PhD in Urban Planning from Sapienza, University of Rome, Italy. He is currently Work Package daily supervisor for the JPI Urban Europe SmartGov Project. His research focuses on citizen engagement in planning and urban development, application of social media, digital, and open source, technologies by government for citizen engagement purposes. He has published several articles in academic journals, such as International Journal of E-planning Research, Journal of Urban Technology, International Journal of Information Management, Land Use Policy, Town Planning Review.

Moderator

Reinout Kleinhans: Associate Professor of Urban Regeneration and Neighbourhood Change at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology. His research interests and expertise include urban regeneration, social capital, citizens' self-organization, online engagement and community entrepreneurship. He holds a PhD in urban geography and has published almost 30 peer-reviewed journal articles and 15 book chapters, and has co-edited several books.

Discussant

Gabriela Viale Pereira: Senior Scientist at the Department for E-Governance and Administration at Danube University Krems in Austria and Visiting Post-doc at Fundação Getúlio Vargas (EAESP/FGV) in Brazil. Gabriela's research is focused on e-government, smart governance and the impacts of the digital technologies on governmental decisions and policy making in a data-driven Era. Currently she is responsible for the development of training modules and curricula on ICT-enabled Governance for the Erasmus+ GOV 3.0 project.

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