



## Government innovation through social media<sup>☆</sup>

J. Ignacio Criado<sup>a</sup>, Rodrigo Sandoval-Almazan<sup>b,\*</sup>, J. Ramon Gil-Garcia<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Political Science and International Relations, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Spain

<sup>b</sup> Accounting and Business Administration Department, Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Mexico, Mexico

<sup>c</sup> Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economicas (CIDE), Mexico

### ARTICLE INFO

Available online 18 November 2013

#### Keywords:

Social media  
e-Government  
Twitter  
Facebook  
Web 2.0  
Innovation  
Digital government  
Government 2.0

### ABSTRACT

Social media in government is becoming one of the major trends in Electronic Government (e-government) research and practice worldwide. During the last few years, several authors have addressed the potential of social media for the innovation of public sector organizations. Most of these contributions have focused on the technical dimensions of social media, while other aspects have not attracted equal attention. In contrast, this introductory article interrogates the role of social media in the basic areas of e-government: government information flows and the availability of government information; the use of information technology to create and provide innovative government services; the impact of information technology on the relationships between the governed and those governing; and the increasing importance of information policies and information technologies for democratic practices. Accordingly, the next few pages propose and develop three dimensions of social media in government: tools, goals, and topics. We think that these dimensions could help to better understand the use of social media in government settings. Then, after a brief review of current trends in social media and government research, we present the articles included in this special issue. Finally, we present some practical lessons and suggest ideas for future research. This special issue could be seen as a starting point for the development of innovation through social media in public administrations around the world.

© 2013 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

The existence of social media tools in government is changing the landscape of public agencies and bureaucracies around the world. During the last years, public administrations have adopted different Web 2.0 tools, such as blogs, microblogging, wikis, social networking, multimedia sharing, mashup applications, tagging, virtual worlds, and crowdsourcing, among others. After some years of experimentation, testing, and assessment, the diffusion of social media in government is now intended to innovate how public bureaucracies operate internally and how they interact with the public outside government's organizational boundaries. This article serves as the introduction to the special issue and considers the existing potential, pitfalls, opportunities, and/or risks derived from the implementation of social media in government settings.

So far, emerging contributions to the study of social media in government are guided by individual more than by collective efforts. Although researchers are progressively developing a research agenda

of common interests in different conferences and journals within the e-government community, this agenda is by no means complete or comprehensive. For example, the special issue coordinated by [Chun and Luna-Reyes \(2012\)](#) showed three schematic representations of how government, citizens, and data models interact through social media (social media-based citizen engagement model; social media-based data sharing model; and social media-based real-time collaborative government model). Nonetheless, it is an example of the current ad hoc approach to the analysis of social media in government and the need to foster a comparative, transnational, and more integrated agenda of research in the future.

This special issue has welcomed contributions from different perspectives and areas of research on social media in government. In that regard, this issue has brought together international high quality research to produce theoretical and empirical insights on aspects related to the adoption, use, results, and impacts of social media in government settings, with a particular emphasis on policy and management aspects, as opposed to technical. This special issue attempts to provide an integrated perspective on social media in government with a particular focus on the implications of innovation in the public sector. To do so, we have used a structure based on three dimensions: tools, goals, and topics. Although the articles accepted for publication have underlined those dimensions in different ways, we asked all authors to consider them as an overall analytical framework.

<sup>☆</sup> Government Information Quarterly Special Issue on Innovating Government through Social Media Tools, Applications, and Strategies.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [ignacio.criado@uam.es](mailto:ignacio.criado@uam.es) (J.I. Criado), [rsandoval@uamex.mx](mailto:rsandoval@uamex.mx) (R. Sandoval-Almazan), [joseramon.gil@cide.edu](mailto:joseramon.gil@cide.edu) (J.R. Gil-Garcia).

Theoretically, Mergel (2012a) is probably the leading contribution to the comprehensive study of social media in public administration so far. Her work is based on the analysis of social media technologies and their application in U.S. government agencies, mostly since the inception of Obama's presidency in 2008. She has pointed out the preliminary consequences of social media application in public agencies, and how these agencies are using social media to promote transparency, participation, and collaboration. Finally, the conclusions of her work illuminate that the biggest challenge is not this new generation of social technologies themselves, but the adaptation of them to the given political and administrative situations and government institutional settings. Accordingly, like other previous technologies (Fountain, 2001; Gil-García, 2012a), social media tools face problems of adaptation to the existing organizational culture and institutional structure of public sector organizations. This argument is an important starting point for our approach to social media in public agencies.

The article is organized in five sections, including this foregoing introduction. The second section defines social media tools in the public sector, giving an idea of previous descriptions and how they can be useful to understand the potentials of social media in government. The third section outlines the state of the art of social media in government, considering the dimensions of interest for this special issue: tools, goals, and topics. Then, we present and briefly describe the articles in this special issue. Finally, the concluding section raises ideas about the future innovations of government using social media, and the research agenda connected to the study of this phenomenon in public administration.

## 2. Defining social media in the public sector

At this point, there is not a comprehensive definition of social media in government. In short, social media can be defined as a group of technologies that allow public agencies to foster engagement with citizens and other organizations using the philosophy of Web 2.0. All the existing approaches have pinpointed the social dimension of Web 2.0 technologies that “refer to a collection of social media through which individuals are active participants in creating, organizing, editing, combining, sharing, commenting, and rating Web content as well as forming a social network through interacting and linking to each other” (Chun, Shulman, Sandoval, & Hovy, 2010: 2). Here, the terms collaborative, traceable, searchable, linkable, and open can be understood as core features of the utilization of social media tools in public administration.

McAfee's (2006) perspective gauges the capabilities of social media in complex organizations. The SLATES capabilities (search, link, authoring, tags, extensions, and signal) are directly derived from the implementation of social media in organizations. Chun and Luna-Reyes (2012) suggest that these technologies enable government's ability to achieve productivity through search capabilities for employees to effectively locate resources and knowledge; linking employees and customers together to develop social networks; allowing employees and customers to co-create and share content and knowledge; tagging to organize and connect content for effective sharing and filtering; extensions to share complex multi-media content through plug-ins; and signals to disseminate the content changes. Chun et al. (2010) and Chun and Luna-Reyes (2012) call this set of capabilities social media enterprises 2.0 or social enterprises. Therefore, social media technologies can be understood as platforms to interact with citizens and organizations with innovative potentialities.

At first sight, the public sector could benefit from the capabilities of social media technologies due to the high amount of data resources available from the interaction with citizens, businesses, and other public administrations. In this line of argument, studies from Mergel (2012b), Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes (2010), and Bertot, Jaeger, and Hansen (2012), among others, suggest the capacity of social media in government to foster co-production of services and public policies, crowdsourcing of

solutions to social and political problems, and political and democratic engagement in a growing dialog about political issues. Consequently, the diffusion of social media in government involves critical aspects for the future of public administration.

## 3. Understanding current research on social media in government: A proposal with three dimensions

There are certainly many ways to classify and understand current research on social media in government. Here, we propose that using three different, interrelated dimensions allows for a better understanding of previous studies about social media in government. Some dimensions profile the emerging research on social media within the e-government community, which began around 2008. There exists a general focus on some specific social media tools and applications, i.e., Facebook, Twitter or YouTube. The goals or objectives derived from the use of social media in the public sector have been broadly oriented, such as participation, collaboration, and transparency, but also openness, good governance, or cost savings. Finally, the topics of interest to social media in government are diverse, including different supporting theories, methodologies, policy domains, levels of government, and countries of reference. At the same time, each of these topics echoes some trends of interest.

### 3.1. Tools

The first dimension refers to the social media instruments and applications that public administrations explicitly use. The expected social media applications in government may differ in type and nature, including, but not limited to, social networking (e.g., Facebook), micro-blogging (e.g., Twitter), multimedia sharing (e.g., YouTube), virtual worlds (e.g., Second Life), mashups and open data (e.g., Data.gov), questioning tools (e.g., Quora), crowdsourcing (e.g., Mechanical Turk), collaboration tools (e.g., Peer-to-Patent and Wiki Government), tagging (e.g., Digg), and content syndication (e.g., RSS). This first dimension indicates not only the type of social technologies actually in operation in public agencies, but also which of them have been analyzed in the literature with more intensity.

A widely shared assumption among researchers is that the most used social media tools in public administrations are those with more utilization in society. Therefore, it is believed that Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, Flickr, and LinkedIn are the most widespread social media technologies in bureaucracies. A quantitative study from Bonsón, Torres, Royo, and Flores (2012) confirms this conclusion at the local level of government in the European Union; Snead (2013), Bridges, Appel, and Grossklags (2012), Kavanaugh et al. (2012), Landsbergen (2010), and Mahler and Regan (2011) confirm it in the U.S.; and Sandoval-Almazan, Gil-García, Luna-Reyes, Luna-Reyes, and Diaz-Murillo (2011) have also found it to be true in the Mexican states. At the same time, this group of technologies is also invoked when addressing the capacities of social media to innovate relationships with the public, to some extent as a result of their level of diffusion and high popularity among public administrations. However, they are not the only social tools and applications the e-government community studies.

In fact, authors have portrayed the use of other types of social media tools. Examples include a Danish online health forum [www.sundhed.dk](http://www.sundhed.dk) (Andersen, Medaglia, & Henriksen, 2012), the COPSS communities of public service support (Meijer, Grimmeliikhuijsen, & Brandsma, 2011), the online forum *antheroisi* (Stylios et al., 2010), the COCKPIT toolkit (Kokkinakos et al., 2012), the OCOPOMO project (Wimmer, Scherer, Moss, & Bicking, 2012), or the *+Spaces* virtual spaces (Kardara et al., 2012). In all these cases, social media tools in government have a different approach than those developed in the private sector because they develop a specific approach to a given situation, or the application solves certain social problems. Therefore, these social networks have an

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1024303>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1024303>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)