Social Media, Citizen Participation, and Government Minitrack
(Introduction)

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Social media and online networks have received a lot of attention in the last decade. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Weibo and LinkedIn provide tools for individuals to come together based on a variety of factors such as existing friendships, common interests, or work. People have discovered how social media can be used to facilitate communication, promote an exchange of ideas, and help mobilize fellow citizens around civic and political issues.

Governments have also discovered the potential for these sites to aid in government information sharing and outreach. The Social Media Citizen Participation, and Government Minitrack tackles social media and networks relating to e-government which may include the use of social media and networks by any level of government, the implementation challenges, trust and privacy issues, different patterns and trends in social media use, information sharing, information overload, and mobile social networking.

The Social Media, Citizen Participation Minitrack contains six papers representing different aspects of social media, particularly in the context of citizen participation and electronic government.

The paper entitled: Social Media Use And Perception of Transparency in The Generation of Trust in Decentralized Public Services, by Cayetano Medina and Ramón Ruffin, incorporates the role of the social media (Twitter and Facebook) used to access information from an organization which, also acts as an intermediary for the delivery of services by another public institution. The results of the study indicate that while the use of Twitter does not moderate the relationship between transparency, trust and satisfaction, the frequency of Facebook use does moderate the relationship between trust and the two antecedents: transparency and satisfaction.

The second paper, A Resource-Based View of Using Social Media for Material Disclosures, by Ludwig Christian Schaupp, Jack Dorminey, and Richard Dull, tests how voluntary social media use for material disclosures is associated with trading volume, using a sample of 267 companies (741 observations) across three time periods. The results show a positive association between social media use for material disclosures and market valuation only in the post-April 2013 guidance period, suggesting that value does accrue when regulatory oversights is explicit.

The third paper, The Effect of Increased Connectivity on Serial Regime Change, which is written by Edward Anderson, investigates how increases in connectivity may increase the probability of overthrowing an unpopular regime, using the system dynamics methodology. The study reveals that connectivity may increase the likelihood of serial regime change and of the final “stable” regime being paradoxically less popular than the regime that was initially overthrown.

Claudia López, Yu-ru Lin, and Rosta Farzan, in their paper, What Makes Hyper-Local Online Discussion Forums Sustainable?, conceptualize sustainability of “hyper-local” communities through the aspects of viability and performance. The study measures three system-level factors that affect sustainability and capture the communities’ social structures. The longitudinal data collected from E-Democracy.org find that network connectedness and centralization are positively associated with performance but not viability.

The fifth paper: Combating Rumor Spread on Social Media: The Effectiveness of Refutation and Warning, by Pinar Ozturk, Huaye Li, and Yasuaki Sakamoto, examines several design ideas for reducing the spread of health-related rumors in a Twitter-like environment. The results reveal that exposing people to information that refutes rumors or warns that the statement appeared on rumor websites could reduce the spread of rumors. The study recommends that social media technologies can be designed in a way that users can self correct and inactivate potentially inaccurate information in their environment.

In the final paper, Emotions and E-participation of Young People, Peter Parycek, Judith Schossboeck, and Ralph Schöllhammer present a quantitative content analysis of blog posts of selected discussions on a EU wide e-participation platform. The platform analyzed has been designed to bring young people in contact with stakeholders and politicians in order to discuss politically relevant topics for young people in Europe. The researchers argue that political participation is motivated by emotions that should be reflected in the blog posts. They also theorize that more emotional users will also be more active on the platform. The study indicates that emotions have a positive effect on political e-participation.