
Preface

DOI: 10:24989/ocg.v.338.0

Social Media have become an everyday part of our live. We use them to communicate with friends and family; businesses and professionals use them to present themselves and their products. Social Media however is only the platform upon which social networks emerge and communicate. The question how this affects public administration and policy is only natural. For the public administration, social networks are a prime opportunity to strengthen citizen relationships and to communicate with their “customers”. It may collect feedback on public services and platforms and hence improve (electronic) public service delivery. Particularly in times of a pandemic this may prove an invaluable means of communications.

In the political domain, however, Social Media can shape politics and may influence the run of history. Not only has it become a prime media to communicate with the electorate – just as an example, former President Obama currently has 116m, President Trump 79m and Prime Minister Modi 56m followers on Twitter – it may also shape elections and political decision making. This can be seen in several ways.

On the one hand, it is a positive development that citizens have many diverse ways to inform themselves and have access to original documents in a way inconceivable to former generations; it also enables them to express themselves and voice their opinions bypassing media and political hierarchies, simply as citizens. On the other hand, however, Social Media are targets of disinformation by both non-state and state actors. There is also the tendency to create Social Media “bubbles”, self-reinforcing echo chambers, which exist on all parts of the political spectrum. If social networks turn into such bubbles, the very promise of Social Media is in danger – an open and hierarchy-free discourse among people and citizens.

The conference is of course dedicated to all sectors of ICT use in the public sector, but the large number of papers on Social Media topics shows that this year’s focal topic was a good choice.

We also decided to dedicate this volume to the late Tim Kraski, a dear colleague from Andrásy Uni, who was part of the organising committee for many years and a promising young scientist who passed away after long illness in 2019. Please also see the obituary in the volume.

Due to the well-known COVID-19 situation, the physical conference on May 7 and 8, 2020 could not take place as intended. It will however be held in autumn 2020, when the situation will have improved. We would like to express our gratitude to all local organisers, whose flexibility and dedication makes this move possible. In this regard, we take the liberty of publishing the conference volume at the time of the original conference – half a year before the actual conference will take place.

We wish all contributors and readers a cordial “stay healthy” – ad multos annos,

The Editors, Budapest/Chisinau/Cluj-Napoca/Ludwigsburg/Münster/Vienna, April 2020