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İbrahim Hatipoğlu *Editors*

# Sub-National Democracy and Politics Through Social Media

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Editors

# Sub-National Democracy and Politics Through Social Media

 Springer

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# Preface

Social media have the potential to contribute to realizing the main democratic values and paving the way for transition to a new understanding of politics. Social media have become a new breath for representative democracy and politics. It is accepted that social media tools offer some innovative opportunities to overcome the democratic legitimacy crisis and strengthen the functioning of politics. Social media with its interactive nature offer opportunities for political actors and governments at all levels. In this context, this edited book aims to analyze how social media impact democracy and politics at the subnational level in both developed and developing countries. Within the framework of this book, subnational level includes states/cantons, regional governments, and local governments in a country. This edited book tries to explain the change that the social media have caused for democracy and politics at the subnational level.

This edited book believes that social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube can strengthen democracy at the subnational level by providing openness, transparency, and accountability and have the potential to make a significant contribution to political actors to achieve their purposes. At the same time, this book emphasizes that there is a need for empirical research that investigates to what extent social media tools realize their potential of enhancing democracy and strengthening politics at the subnational level. In this context, the book specifically raises the following research questions: (1) How do social media impact on democracy and politics at the subnational level? (2) Do social media play a role to promote democracy and public engagement at the subnational level? (3) Do the social media tools transform the politics at the subnational level?

Despite the expansion of literature on the political use of social media, there are almost no books that focus on the relationship between social media, democracy, and politics within the context of subnational level. In general, books in the relevant literature focus on the national level, and subnational level gets much less attention. This study presents cases from some countries with different political regimes, administrative structures, political and administrative culture, and socioeconomic levels. In this context, this edited book promises to fill in a vital gap in the relevant literature.

This book consists of three basic parts. Part I, *Drivers and Barriers*, focuses on factors that affect the adoption of social media tools by political actors and public institutions to be used for democracy and in political activities and processes at the subnational level, because, before anything else, social media tools must be adopted by political actors and public institutions to be used for democracy and in politics. Part 1 of the book covers case studies from Spain, China, and Sweden.

Part II, *Social Media for Democracy*, includes chapters that analyze potential contributions of social media tools to realizing the main democratic values such as public engagement, transparency, accountability, participation, and collaboration at the subnational level within the context of case studies from Greece, Turkey, Spain, and the USA.

Part III, *Social Media in Politics*, focuses on the use of social media tools by political actors in political processes and activities at the local, regional, and state government levels during the election and nonelection periods. Part 3 includes case studies from Israel, Norway, the USA, and Ecuador.

The book provides a good source of reference for graduate students, academicians, and researchers, in several disciplines and fields, such as political science, public administration, and communication studies. Moreover, politicians and administrators will find the book very useful. Politicians, public officials, and research centers on social media in politics around the world can use the insights from the book to guide their decisions.

This book is a product of a very intensive effort of many people. This book would not be possible without the tireless work of the authors and the constructive comments of reviewers. We would like to record our gratitude to them. Firstly, we would like to thank the contributing authors of this book. The review process was carefully undertaken to improve the quality of the chapters. Therefore, we thank the reviewers for their invaluable contribution to this book project. In particular, we offer our special appreciation to Springer and its publishing team.

Bursa, Turkey

Mehmet Zahid Sobacı  
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# Contents

## Part I Drivers and Barriers

- 1 Measuring Social Media Diffusion in Local Governments from a Longitudinal Perspective: Adoption, Barriers, and Perceptions . . . . .** 3  
J. Ignacio Criado, Vicente Pastor, and Julián Villodre
- 2 The Post-Adoption Behaviors of Government Social Media in China . . . . .** 29  
Liang Ma
- 3 Challenges of Digital Politics at the Subnational Level in Sweden: Descriptions and Explanations of Social Media Usage . . . . .** 47  
Gustav Lidén

## Part II Social Media for Democracy

- 4 Attack, Interact, and Mobilize: Twitter Communication Strategies of Greek Mayors and their Effects on Users' Engagement . . . . .** 65  
Amalia Triantafyllidou, Georgios Lappas, Alexandros Kleftodimos, and Prodromos Yannas
- 5 The Effect of Post Type and Post Category on Citizen Interaction Level on Facebook: The Case of Metropolitan and Provincial Municipalities in the Marmara Region of Turkey . . . . .** 91  
Mehmet Zahid Sobacı, İbrahim Hatipoğlu, and Mehmet Fırkan Korkmaz



**6 Citizens’ Engagement in Local Government in a New Political Scenario: Emergent vs. Traditional Parties** . . . . . 107  
 Alejandro Sáez-Martín, Juana Alonso-Cañadas,  
 Federico Galán-Valdivieso, and Carmen Caba-Pérez

**7 Social Media Use from the Citizen Engagement Perspective: The Case of Twitter in New York and Chicago Participatory Budgeting** . . . . . 129  
 Won No and Chul Hyun Park

**Part III Social Media in Politics**

**8 Perceptions, Uses, Visual Aspects, and Consequences of Social Media Campaigning: Lessons from Municipal Facebook Campaigning, Israel 2013** . . . . . 149  
 Azi Lev-On

**9 Small Is the New Big – At Least on Twitter: A Diachronic Study of Twitter Use during Two Regional Norwegian Elections** . . . . . 169  
 Anders Olof Larsson

**10 From Offline Politics to Online Action: Social Media Adoption and Communication by the Legislators, Lobbyists, and Business Groups of Maine** . . . . . 183  
 James Cook, Carrie Hill, and Jennifer Chase

**11 Politics and Digital Media: An Exploratory Study of the 2014 Subnational Elections in Ecuador** . . . . . 207  
 Yanina Welp, Pedro Capra, and Flavia Freidenberg

**Part I**  
**Drivers and Barriers**

# Chapter 1

## Measuring Social Media Diffusion in Local Governments from a Longitudinal Perspective: Adoption, Barriers, and Perceptions



J. Ignacio Criado, Vicente Pastor, and Julián Villodre

**Abstract** Public sector organizations have started to use digital social media as a management tool to improve the level of communication with the citizenry. Social media technologies have offered the opportunity for public administrations to receive, process, and use data and information from the political and social realms, and from their own public employees from a radically different approach. This chapter provides empirical data about the adoption, use and dissemination of social media in the Spanish local governments from a longitudinal perspective. Our research aims at answering four main research questions: (RQ1) What are the key reasons that explain social media adoption in public administrations? (RQ2) What is the perception of those in charge of social media management regarding the level of development in their institutions? (RQ3) What are the key inhibitors for the development of these technologies in local administrations? (RQ4) What is the evolution of utilization of social media technologies? For that purpose, our research is conducted by using a questionnaire aimed at those in charge of social media in Spanish local governments with over 50.000 inhabitants in two different time moments (2014 and 2016). Hence, by applying Roger's framework of diffusion of innovations, descriptive results show that in spite of its high level of diffusion at local government, social media utilization is still at an early stage of implementation. The chapter also concludes with some suggestions for future research, emphasizing the importance of studying the adoption of social media in local government with a comparative and longitudinal perspective.

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## 1.1 Introduction

The adoption of social media in the public sector has attracted the attention of both academia and public organizations in recent years. Their rapid diffusion is associated with the belief that the use of social technologies should improve and innovate the areas of transparency, participation and collaboration (Criado and Rojas-Martín 2015; Mergel 2015; Bertot et al. 2010). This has spread the idea of social media as technologies with high disruptive potential to a large extent due to their ability to create, organize, exchange, combine and provide information, interconnecting individuals and enabling bidirectional communication (Bertot et al. 2010; Chun et al. 2010; Meijer and Thaens 2010).

This chapter aims to contribute to the studies on adoption of digital social media in the public sector. To do this, and based on the methodology used in previous research (Criado and Rojas-Martín 2013; Criado and Rojas-Martín 2015), the chapter collects data from Spanish local governments over 50,000 inhabitants through the use of a questionnaire. By using descriptive statistical analysis, the study compares the obtained results in 2016 with those of 2014 (Criado and Rojas-Martín 2015). In both cases the research was designed with the following comparable objectives about social media: (a) to identify the departments leading the adoption process; (b) to determine the existence of formal documents that orientate and standardize their use; (c) to check the motivation behind social media adoption; (d) to identify the type of technologies adopted; and (e) to distinguish the potential inhibiting factors that could slow their implementation.

The adoption of social networks and platforms in the public sector has been studied both in the scope of its external and internal dimensions. The external dimension (interactions between public administration and citizenship) has been understood regarding the presence of public agencies in digital social networks, mainly Twitter and Facebook, including the citizens' interest of using social media as a way to access public information. But at the same time, public employees have become interested in its internal dimension (collaboration between civil servants), with the creation of specialized digital networks such as GovLoop (Mergel 2012) or NovaGob (The GovLab 2016; Criado et al. 2016). Both dimensions reflect the possible transition to a collaborative paradigm, Smart Governance (Criado 2016; Noveck 2015; Rodríguez-Bolívar and Meijer 2015).

Hence, our study tries to focus on some of the main current gaps in the literature of social media in the public sector. One of the most important gaps that this chapter tries to cover refers to the analysis of perceptions and opinions of local public managers. As noted by Medaglia and Zheng (2017), studies addressing the behavior and perception of social networks users are scarce, and the small numbers are even more troublesome when reflecting the uses and perceptions of public officials (Mergel 2015). In that sense, the vast majority of studies have focused on quantifying the generation of content (Konsti-Laakso 2017; Agostino and Arnaboldi 2016), and classifying that content according to different categories (Reddick et al. 2017; Jukic and Merlak 2017).

On the other hand, our study examines longitudinally the development of social media adoption, including and extensive approach to some of the mainstream inhibitors, by investigating two different time periods. Even with recent models that allow observing the adoption of social media over time (Mergel and Bretschneider 2013), studies that employ longitudinal perspectives are rare, highlighting the predominance to observe the uses of a given technology or project at a specific moment, or without any explicit time consideration (Medaglia and Zheng 2017). In regard to the study of the main barriers in social media adoption, recent years have begun to be more prolific in this field, studying the main challenges in adopting social technologies (Zheng 2013) and focusing these challenges on local governments (Criado et al. 2017).

This chapter is interested in analyzing how the adoption of digital social media is taking place at municipal level. This chapter seeks to answer the following research questions: (RQ1) What are the key reasons that explain social media adoption in public administrations? (RQ2) What is the perception of those in charge of social media management regarding the level of development in their institutions? (RQ3) What are the key inhibitors for the development of these technologies in local administrations? (RQ4) What is the evolution of utilization of social media technologies? The study uses data collected through a survey, from a total of 146 local governments with more than 50,000 inhabitants.

For the analysis, a double strategy is used. On the one hand, 2016 results are compared with those obtained in 2014. Comparability is possible thanks to the identical design of the surveys and the reliability of the model. On the other hand, the framework of Rogers (2003) is used to identify the current stage of adoption within our group of cases. This framework to describe the process of diffusion of innovations becomes suitable in our research, for its capacity to understand social media technologies dissemination as an open process, and the simplicity of the five ideal types. Thus, the chapter will attend the current state of social media adoption in the Spanish municipalities in terms of these ideal types.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, there is a literature review focusing on some of the most recent discussions on the adoption of digital social media in the public sector. After our literature review, the chapter presents Rogers' (2003) analytical framework for the diffusion of innovation, which will be used to detect the stage of adoption in the discussion of results. Subsequently, the methodological design and analytic strategy is presented. Next, the chapter tries to answer the research questions, showing and comparing 2014 and 2016 data about the adoption of social media in the Spanish local governments. Finally, results are discussed focusing on Rogers' ideal types, and some conclusions are presented, encouraging future research to study social media adoption with a comparative perspective between countries.

## 1.2 Literature Review: Social Media Adoption in the Public Sector

The adoption of digital social media has become a phenomenon of rapid diffusion in personal and professional spheres. Public agencies are also adopting these social technologies for diverse purposes such as “keeping up with the times, profit maximization, public relations, and promotion of more efficient and participatory government” (Yildiz et al. 2016, p. 58). In that sense, a dynamic field of research has been originated, seeking to analyze the results of social media adoption, diffusion, and implementation in government (Criado et al. 2013; Medaglia and Zheng 2017).

Social media comprises a set of technologies that are strongly disruptive and have a transformative potential for the public sector. In general, social media are seen as communication technologies, usually bi-directional, designed for social relations, but also for public, economic and political relations (Yildiz et al. 2016). Social networks are based on the web 2.0 philosophy (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010), which makes them tools where individuals are active participants in both content consumption and creation (Chun et al. 2010). Because of their immediate, interactive and engaging nature, social media technologies have become capable of displacing previous ICTs, due to their ability to create value (Ma 2016). And it is precisely their disruptive nature, their diffusion and their potential to transform communication, transparency, and collaboration which make them a challenge to take into account in the public sector (Zheng 2013).

In broad terms, one may include into social media category a large number of applications. From wikis (i.e. Wikipedia), blogs, exchange and collaborative communities (i.e. Github), to specialized communities, in images and video (i.e. Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, Snapchat), microblogging (i.e. Twitter, Weibo), or professional networks (LinkedIn, Govloop, NovaGob) and generalist massive social networks (Facebook, WeChat). In Spain, it is estimated that about 80% of the population is an active user of digital social networking (CIS 2016).

When adopting any strategy of social media in the public sector, the most current literature has gradually begun to reflect some key points. In his study of challenges and success factors in the implementation of social media in the Chinese government, Zheng (2013) summarizes in 5 dimensions the challenges that any government can find when it comes to starting its journey in social media: (a) social and economic factors, (b) political and legal, (c) organizational and managerial, (d) management of information and (e) technological factors. As Zheng (2013) has pointed out, it seems that most of the challenges appear in the organizational and management dimension, directly related to government capabilities, along with the economic and political dimensions. As for the adoption of social media, the technological challenges appear as the less intense (Zheng 2013; Zheng and Ren 2012), since social media technology is already developed.

On the other hand, scholars have also worked to identify the perceptions of those responsible for social media adoption and implementation in public agencies. Here, Picazo-Vela et al. (2012) developed a study with perceptions about risks, benefits

and strategies in their study of 250 Mexican public servants. These risks are directly related to the general context, institutional frameworks, collaboration networks, the organizational structure, and the treatment of information and technology (Picazo-Vela et al. 2012).

The question about what drives the adoption of social media in the public sector has also become relevant in the literature, although not being systematically investigated. In her study of social media applications for local health departments in the USA, Ma (2016, p. 76) points out that, “although the literature has examined the extensive use of SMAs adoption, what drives their adoption has not yet been systematically investigated”. As Ma (2016) suggested, it is vital to understand how social media is adopted, in order to promote extensive use in the public sector, which may help to generate positive consequences in terms of transparency, participation and collaboration.

In this same vein, two recent studies are noteworthy. In their study about standardization and organizational formalization, Bretschneider and Parker (2016) found that in organizations with greater rule standardization and rule clarity, social media adoption was greater in a wider range of applications. These authors have suggested that “rules and standardization can be powerful tools for promoting and diffusing new information and communication technologies within organizations” (Bretschneider and Parker 2016, p. 614). On the other hand, in a recent study on Mexico, Picazo-Vela et al. (2016) have also opened the black box of social media adoption, highlighting the importance of collaboration between organizations and citizens for the success of social media strategies within the public sector.

Finally, it is important to highlight another contribution to the identification of success factors, from the perspective of new institutionalism. Criado et al. (2017) identify factors that make social media adoption successful. In their research about local governments, they find a direct relationship between organizational, institutional and environmental factors, confirming the validity of the “Enacting Electronic Government Success” (EEGS) model (Gil-García 2012), in the case of social media technologies. Hence, they confirm the validity of EEGS model to study social media success in the public sector.

In addition, social media technologies adoption in public organizations has been recently integrated within an emerging paradigm: Smart Governance. The characteristics of social media, especially those addressing open collaboration and co-production (Mergel 2015; Criado and Villodre 2016; Chun and Warner 2010), participation and transparency (Ellison and Hardey 2014; Meijer and Thaens 2010) and, ultimately, the involvement of citizen communities in the innovation processes, fit into a new paradigm Smart Governance (Criado 2016; Noveck 2015; Rodríguez-Bolívar and Meijer 2015). This new paradigm is compared to other previous paradigms based on new foundations (Criado 2016): a) presence of values derived from web 2.0 philosophy; b) opportunities to generate open data and transparency; c) diffusion of digital social networks; d) new emphasis towards the appropriation of external knowledge; and e) new collaboration dynamics between public employees, public organizations and citizens.

These processes are not alien to the internal dimension of public agencies and the collaboration among public employees. Accordingly, the work of Mergel (2015) has surveyed the presence of civil servants in GitHub, a digital community where organizations share code and make the process of developing public software a collaborative activity involving people from different organizations. This is also the case of GovLoop, a digital community designed to provide civil servants with an informal collaborative space encouraging discussion and networking opportunities (Mergel 2012). Both studies have pinpointed the interest about public managers' behavior when they interact using social technologies.

### 1.3 Analytical Framework: Diffusion of Innovations

This chapter uses the analytical framework proposed by Rogers in his seminal work "Diffusion of innovations" to discuss the research results. In his book, Rogers (2003) looks at innovation as a process through which an innovation is communicated within various channels, and in the use given by different users. It identifies five categories of adoption in innovations, five ideal types that are suitable for comparison. These five categories will be used in this chapter, in order to classify the current stage of adoption of social technologies in Spanish municipalities: a) innovators, b) early adopters, c) early majority, d) late majority and e) laggards.

The innovators are the first ideal type shown by Rogers. They should be seen as entrepreneur organizations. The innovator is the one who takes the main risk in starting the diffusion process, faces the uncertainties related to creation and the possible ratio of use of innovation (Rogers 2003). And when the innovator is not directly the creator, becomes the gate keeper of the product, who chooses when, how and in what form it will be launched, and how innovation will flow into the social system. We will take into account as "innovators" those local authorities that have launched their own platforms and social technologies from the very beginning.

Secondly, the so-called "early adopter" are found as a more integrated part in the social system than innovators. Early adopters are true social and organizational leaders in terms of innovation, having an increased capacity for opinion and judgment about innovations (Rogers 2003), and helping triggering "the critical mass when they adopt the innovation" (Rogers 2003, p. 283). Because of that, early adopters heavily rely on "respect" from others. In fact, its power is based on a constant risky decision-making process that allows them to stay on the edge of innovation (Rogers 2003). This category should include those municipalities that are seen as pioneers in the adoption and use of digital social networks and, because of that, should present advanced stages in the implementation and use of social technologies.

Third, as an ideal type, early majority corresponds to a somewhat more advanced stage of diffusion. The early majority is heavily influenced by early adopters' opinions (Rogers 2003), and they become the first critical mass of innovation. In that sense, his period of contact with the innovation is less than the early adopters, taking



more exhaustively the statement “be not the first by which the new is tried, nor the last to lay the old aside” (Rogers 2003, p. 284). In this group we should include those local governments that, although they have developed and implemented social networking strategies, and are aware of their potential for communication, participation, transparency and collaboration, have not deployed some of these potentialities, and are halfway to achieve a successful adoption strategy.

The fourth category refers to a much more heterogeneous group, that Rogers calls the late majority. Organizations or people embedded in this ideal type are part of a second critical mass of innovation, shaped by a more skeptical point of view. They are characterized by being much more cautious than the early majority (Rogers 2003), always waiting for the product to be perfectly tested. The pressure of other organizations or individuals is important to encourage the adoption of innovation in this group. We hope, therefore, that this group reflects a very incipient stage of implementation of social networks in public organizations, which could be oriented with some kind of “first steps” in social technology environments.

The fifth ideal type corresponds to the laggards. They are the very last to adopt innovation. Their point of reference is the past (Rogers 2003), where they find security in more traditional values. They are reluctant to innovations, and often lack the resources to understand these innovations (Rogers 2003). This group forms a big critical mass in the process of innovation. But, since our research focuses on those municipalities that have already begun the adoption process, we will not deal with this ideal type.

## 1.4 Methodology

This chapter aims at updating previous data about the process of adoption and use of social media in Spanish municipalities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. After answering our research questions, we will state some insights about the process of social media diffusion in the Spanish local layer of government. The Spanish local administration is especially characterized by its fragmentation. There are a total of 8117 municipalities (Poveda 2015), distributed by population as follows: there are 6813 municipalities with up to 5000 inhabitants; and only 62 municipalities with more than 100,000 inhabitants. Therefore, there exists a high level of atomization at the local level of Spanish local layer of government (Poveda 2015). This study has selected Spanish municipalities that have more than 50,000 inhabitants (a total of 146), given that their size and population make them conducive to technological innovation, especially considering the overwhelming majority of small municipalities in Spain.

Data collection began in June 2016, and ended in December 2016, with a response rate close to 85% (122 cases), confirming the representativeness and quality of results. The study conducted in 2014 was carried out in an identical way and the data collection process took place between March and July 2014 with a parallel rate of response (above 97%) (Criado and Rojas-Martín 2015). In both cases, the

technique used to collect information was a questionnaire, with almost the same questions. The questionnaire was sent directly to the public managers leading social media in each local administration. The purpose has been to compare our current data with previous information from 2014, being the first international study of this nature that compares two different observations longitudinally with the same group of respondents.

The aspects of the study are identified as follows:

- Presence of social media adoption. In this initial phase, studies are trying to establish the level of presence of public organizations on social media through official profiles (Ellison and Hardey 2014).
- Reasons explaining the use of social media. The purpose of this dimension consists in establishing the reasons that have driven those in charge of social media management in local governments to use these technologies. This is a question that has been previously employed in similar studies (Zheng 2013; Mergel 2013; Gil-García 2012).
- Perceptions about the development of social media. This dimension is used to analyze the perception of those in charge of social media strategies. An optimistic vision about the development and potential of these social technologies is expected (Ma 2016).
- Inhibitors for the development of social media. This is one of the aspects that usually receive least attention in this field. And, as we have seen before, there are many challenges that the public sector faces when adopting social media utilization (Zheng 2013).

The study is based on data about these four group features. The interpretation of data is grounded on a descriptive statistical analysis, and will facilitate the exploration of the current situation of social media adoption. The following section presents the data analysis on each abovementioned aspects, comparing the results to previous research.

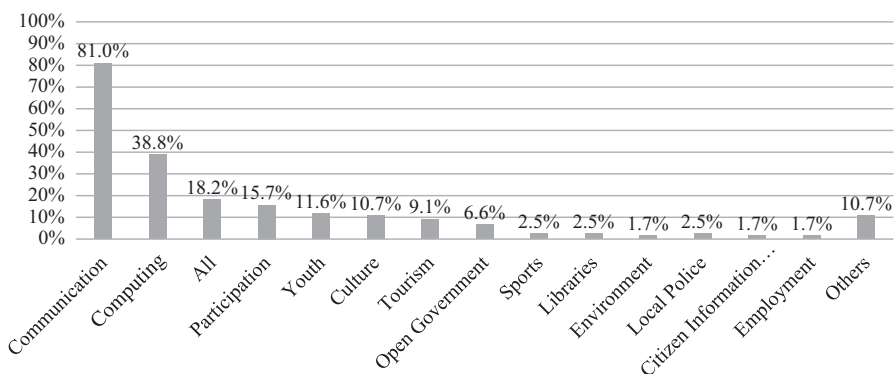
## 1.5 Results

In this section we present the collected data, analyzing them through the use of descriptive statistics. Data analysis must be interpreted in the context of the recent diffusion of these technologies in the public sector. At the same time, one may suggest that social media technologies have been adopted in almost all the local government, confirming the idea that this innovation is in its final stage of diffusion. At the same time, the qualitative side of the adoption process needs more analysis.

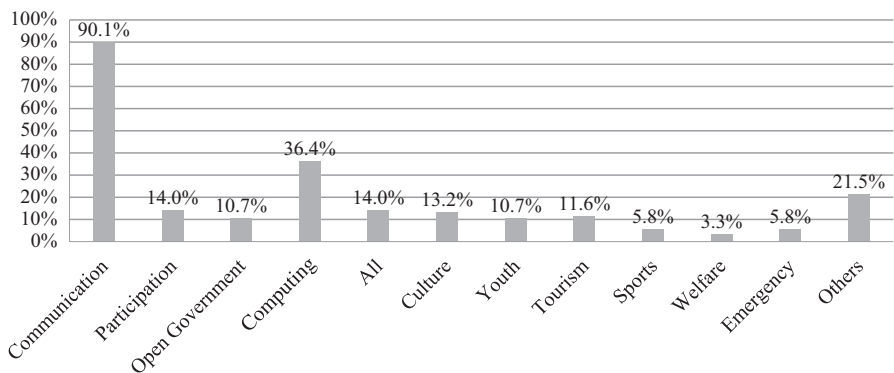
### 1.5.1 Departments Responsible for Social Media Management

This organizational dimension aims at identifying the department, unit or area of the city council in charge of social media management. On the one hand, the information shown in the first graphs (Fig. 1.1 and Fig. 1.2) help us to understand the strategic direction in the adoption of social media. On the other hand, focusing on the units that manage the social media (if management is more centralized or decentralized) can be useful to identify whether behind that direction is a web 2.0 philosophy (focused on horizontal organizations and distributed management).

As shown in Fig. 1.1, in 2014 the complete dominance in 2014 of communication departments in social media management (with 81.1%), followed by computing



**Fig. 1.1** Departments responsible for the management of social media (2014). *Source:* Own elaboration from Criado and Rojas-Martín (2015). Question 8. Could you indicate which unit/s or department/s are involved in the management of social networks in the town hall? (N = 121)



**Fig. 1.2** Departments responsible for social media management (2016). *Source:* Own elaboration. Question 7: Could you indicate which unit/s or department/s are involved in the management of social networks in the town hall? (N = 121)

departments (38.8%). The predominance of communication departments in social media could be directly related to the informational dimension of social technologies. In addition, communication departments are usually located close to city mayors, which may indicate the importance given to social media to promote the political dimension of public agencies.

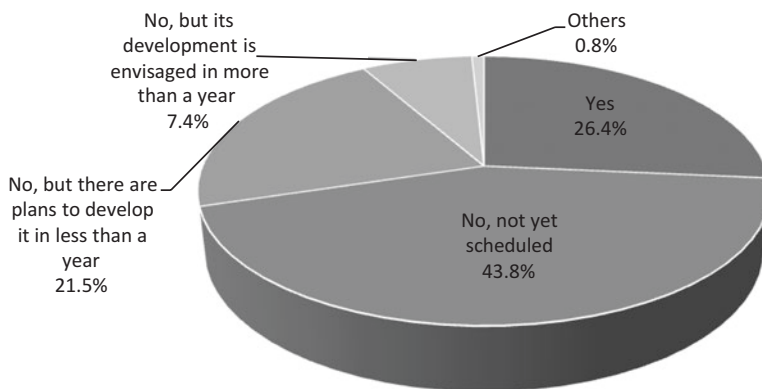
Fig. 1.2 shows the updated data for the 2016 questionnaire. As can be seen, the predominance of communication departments is strongly accentuated (90.1%), followed, as in 2014, by computing departments (36, 4%). the preponderance of communication and computation departments in social media management seems to be related to the technological and informative dimension of the social technologies. On the one hand, the communicative dimension of social media seems to be understood as a base for unidirectional and direct communication with the citizens. On the other hand, the explicit involvement of computing departments in social media management reveals the importance of technological resources. In both cases, the significance of informative and computational aspects leaves behind other important elements, such as participation and collaboration with the citizenry.

It is worth to mention other responses, especially those that indicated that social media management was distributed among diverse units. As shown by Fig. 1.1 and Fig. 1.2, it could be noted the significant number of municipalities that appear to have more than one department (or even all) involved in social media management. The questionnaire predominantly identifies culture, youth, tourism and participation as quite relevant. In addition, 14% (2016) responded that all departments of the municipality were involved in social media management. This trend seems to highlight the decentralized or distribute management nature of these technologies, as a differential feature that could experience growth in the future.

Furthermore, it seems interesting to mention the emergence of specialized departments in open government. They are starting to assume social media management (10.7%) (2016), and future research should continue focusing on the observation of diffusion of these new departments, innovative in the Spanish administrative sphere. Social media management from open government departments could mean the adoption of new social media strategies broadly focused on transparency, participation, collaboration, or accountability together.

### ***1.5.2 The Introduction of Policies or Guidance for the Use of Digital Social Media***

Social media user guides are documents that inform about some of the most important social media management dimensions. These documents seek to formalize and guide a concrete social media strategy. The existence of these guides may serve as an indicator of certain normalization in the use of social media within the organization (Chen et al. 2016; Criado and Rojas-Martín 2015). Their absence does not



**Fig. 1.3** Existence of user guides for social media (2014). *Source:* Own elaboration from Criado and Rojas-Martín (2015). Question 4. Please indicate if a user guide has been developed for use in digital social networks in your administration. (N = 120)

imply failure in the process of implementation, but the institutions that have developed them show a certain degree of commitment through social media adoption.

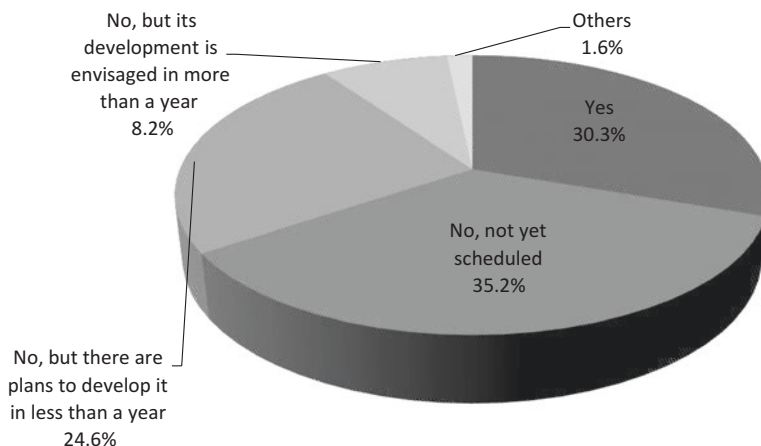
With the aim to explain what is being referred to when we talk about user guides, and without seeking to offer a definitive description, the definition included in the ‘Use and style guide of Catalonia’s region’ (Generalitat de Catalunya 2013) has been chosen, as pioneering in Spain. This document states that:

The use and style guide in social networks establishes some common guidelines for a homogeneous presence in social networks. The Guide contains the procedure recommended to open email accounts or create accounts and profiles in any department, service [...] in these spaces of relationship and participation. It also enumerates the different social networking tools, the diverse uses and objectives of each, recommendations for an appropriate and fruitful presence, and the style criteria that is most appropriate for each tool.

As the data for 2014 showed (Fig. 1.3), 26.4% of surveyed local governments claimed to have such documents. However, 43.8% of the municipalities confirmed that they did not have a guide, and had no plans to develop it. Also, 21.5% of the social media profile managers indicated that, despite not having it, there were plans on introducing such guidance in less than a year.

As can be seen in Fig. 1.4, up to 2016, results do not seem to have improved significantly. There are still many municipalities that do not have user guides and are not planning to have them (35.2%). Despite this fact, 30.3% of the municipalities claimed to have a guide already in operation. Thus, Fig. 1.4 highlights the commitment of those municipalities that, despite not having a guide available, are planning to implement it in less than a year (24.6%). In sum, in the majority of the cases studied, it is remarkable the absence of documents that normalize the use of social media.

The analysis also shows that about 70% of the municipalities do not have developed user guides. In the same line of previous paragraphs, we could interpret this



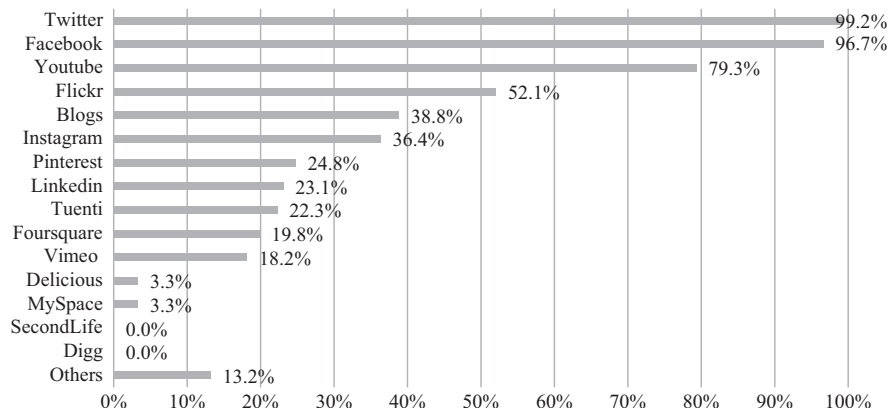
**Fig. 1.4** Existence of user guides for social media (2016). *Source:* Own elaboration. Question 3: Please, indicate if a user guide has been developed for use in digital social networks in your administration. (N = 122)

results as a lack of commitment to the normalization of social media, and also as a weakness in the social media implementation process. These data do reflect a lack of commitment, especially by the large number of municipalities that do not appear to have an interest in normalizing the management process.

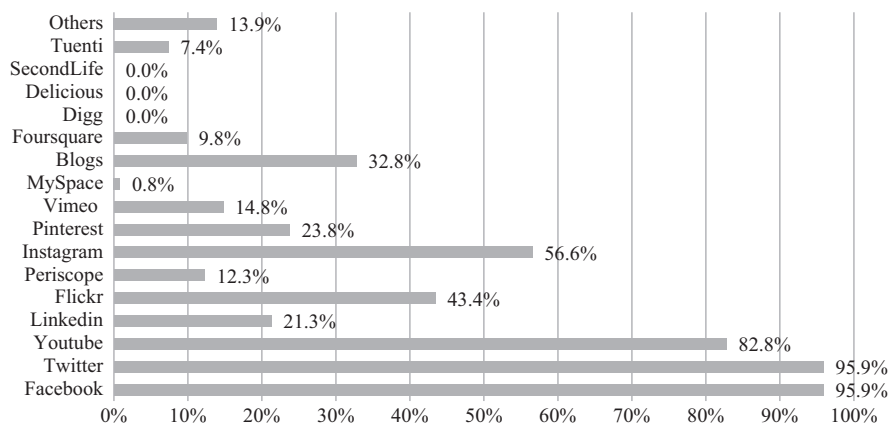
### 1.5.3 Main Social Technologies Employed

There is a wide range of social media applications. Each one of them offers different characteristics and services. This dimension focuses on observing in which digital social networks have the municipalities chosen to have a profile, detecting to which features and tools are paying more attention. In general terms, Fig. 1.5 (2014) and Fig. 1.6 (2016) show that Spanish local governments have chosen to have presence in exogenous social media platforms. Overall evolution have been geared towards having presence during the last years in some of the most important digital social media per number of users and interactions (like Facebook and Twitter), instead of developing their own social platforms. Therefore, they have focused on the tools which are most used by citizens.

The data shown in Fig. 1.5 and Fig. 1.6 displays broad heterogeneity in the use of social media. The important presence of profiles on Facebook (95.9%, in 2016) and on Twitter (95.9%, in 2016) is noteworthy. In the case of Facebook, it is the largest digital social network in the world. Facebook is a general social media platform, which has its market mainly in family and friends' relationships, although public agencies and private companies also have their place. Twitter is a microblog-



**Fig. 1.5** Main social technologies employed (2014). *Source:* Own elaboration from Criado and Rojas-Martín (2015). Question 7. Please indicate in which digital social networks your town hall has a presence and the number of active profiles. (N = 121)



**Fig. 1.6** Main social technologies employed (2016). *Source:* Own elaboration. Question 6: Please, indicate in which digital social networks your town hall has presence and the number of active profiles. (N = 122)

ging platform that has experienced spectacular growth in recent years, and is characterized by its high degree of interaction and bi-directionality.

Besides Facebook and Twitter, we find tools oriented to multimedia exchange, such as YouTube and Instagram. In the case of YouTube (82.8% in 2016), we find a digital social network that allows its users to upload videos, and is characterized by its high level of interaction through responses and video responses. In the case of Instagram (56.6% in 2016), we find the “current queen” in terms of video, live video and image upload, completely bypassing the use of Flickr during our last survey.