

Call for Papers

Workshop

Social media and the prospects for expanded democratic participation in national policy-setting

Workshop Title: Social media and the prospects for expanded democratic participation in national policy-setting
Date and Venue: April 9, 2015, Boston University, Boston, MA USA
Abstracts Due: November 29, 2014
Decision Date: December 15, 2014

The power of social media appears at times almost limitless. Indeed, when explaining the reasons for ISIL's surprising success, President Obama included in the list that they had been "savvy in terms of their social media" (*CBS 60 Minutes*, 9/28/14). Social media have been credited at least in part with not only a catastrophe in Iraq and Syria, but in catalyzing the overthrow of Middle Eastern dictators and helping elect America's first African-American president. While there is no arguing that social media have affected daily life, their impact on the conduct governance, widely considered, seems slight. This is perhaps surprising since social media offers the promise of expanded participation and more inclusive participation opportunities in governance. That is, not only in creating more responsive policies, but better ones as well. Yet although social media have demonstrated their critical role in electoral politics and many other domains including disseminating political news and information, they have not yet been effectively deployed in helping set national policy. New social media platforms could potentially expand the quality and level of public support in areas such as law enforcement, health, education, and public diplomacy.

To better understand the barriers as well as potential role, both positive and negative, of social media in setting national goals and policies, leading thinkers will be coming to Boston University's College of Communication on April 9, 2015. With papers having been prepared in advance, the day-long event will allow in-depth analysis of the latest thinking on these issues. In addition, time will be set aside for a mapping exercise to consider what the next steps are in terms of needed future research so that the insights presented at the workshop can help inform other researchers both in the United States and beyond. The papers and discussions from this workshop will be widely disseminated and follow-up meetings with other groups will be held. Depending on the findings presented at the workshop, further steps, such as convening a blue-ribbon panel to advance recommendations may be considered.

The format of the workshop will combine invited and competitively accepted papers. In terms of invited speakers, we have acceptances from professors at Harvard University, Oxford University, George Washington University, University of Washington, Syracuse, Wellesley, Roskilde

University, and the Sorbonne, among other academic centers. Moreover, to help assure that innovative thinking and a broad array of perspectives will be included, we are circulating this call for papers. In this way, we will be able to accommodate an additional small number of paper-presenters.

Hence, we are soliciting additional papers on the workshop topic. Although we will consider for inclusion in a broad array of related topics, new and previously unpublished work that goes directly to the question at hand is of most interest to us. Those wishing to be considered as presenters should send an abstract of about 250 words to Dr. Jill Walsh (JillW@BU.edu) no later than November 29, 2014. Notice of acceptance will be given on December 15, 2014. Completed papers will be circulated on March 9, 2015 and will be made available on the Center for Mobile Communication Studies website (<http://sites.bu.edu/cmcs/>). Due to limited space, the number of participants must be strictly limited.

Co-organizers

James E. Katz, Ph.D., Dr.h.c., is the Feld Family Professor of Emerging Media at Boston University's College of Communication and director of its Division of Emerging Media Studies. His latest book, *The Social Media President: Barack Obama and the Politics of Digital Engagement* (2013, Palgrave Macmillan), provides an in-depth exploration of the use and abuse of social media for civic participation at the White House level.

David Karpf, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor in the School of Media and Public Affairs at George Washington University. His work focuses on strategic communication practices of political associations in America, with a particular interest in Internet-related strategies. Author of *The MoveOn Effect: The Unexpected Transformation of American Political Advocacy* (2012, Oxford University Press), Karpf highlights the disruptive role that the Internet has played in the advocacy group system and differential partisan adoption of new technologies.

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