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Normalizing Government Social Media Communication: A Swedish Case Analysis

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Abstract

Social media is transforming how political power is exercised through communication, functioning both as a critical resource and as a catalyst for institutional adaptation in executive government. This article examines how social media is integrated into government communication, distinguishing between two dimensions: structure and process. Drawing on a literature review and a case study of Sweden—based on interviews with government press secretaries/media advisers and analysis of official documents—we develop a theoretical logic in which resources act as a causal mechanism driving the normalization of social media. We conceptualize this process as operating through two pathways: adaptation to new communicative requirements and the combination of different media, here termed strategic complementarity. The findings show that social media has become an embedded element of government communication, steadily reshaping routines, professional roles, and the balance between traditional and digital channels. This study contributes to understanding how governments manage hybrid media environments and highlights the underexplored role of social media as a potential driver of power redistribution.

Keywords

digitalization; government communication; hybrid media; institutional adaptation; national governance; normalization of social media; power resource; press secretaries; strategic complementarity; Sweden

1. Introduction

A substantial body of research has examined social media in political contexts, focusing on its role as a campaign tool, a policy instrument, or a storytelling platform, and on its use by politicians and organizations.

Existing studies document the growing importance of social media for political actors and institutions including the wider public sector. The appeal of social media has often been linked to its distinctive affordances—its technological and communicative properties (e.g., Daniel & Obholzer, 2025; Larsson et al., 2025; Stier et al., 2018). However, most of this research centres on election campaigning. By contrast, far less is known about the use of social media in national government communication—its structures, processes, practices, and strategies. This leaves a significant gap in our understanding of how governments adapt to *digital media logics*—the technological and communicative norms specific to digital platforms. This article addresses part of that gap, contributing to the literature on political/government communication and national governance by examining governmental adaptation to digital media. Our guiding question is: How can we account for governments' normalization of social media?

We approach this question by theorizing government communication on social media, developing a conceptualization that reflects the unique characteristics of social media, its widespread adoption, and its integration into governance. Sweden serves as our case study. Digitalization is a stated priority in the methods and processes of national governance, with extensive use of digital communication channels (Government Offices of Sweden, 2025a, 2025b). This reflects a broader global pattern in which governments expand and strategically instrumentalize social media for both internal and external communication. We suggest that adoption and normalization of social media in government communication are shaped by two key components: structure and process. Applying a structure–process framework, our study examines these elements using novel data from interviews and official documents. We find that social media has become normalized in government communication, driven by the evolving media landscape, the proliferation of platforms, and the diversity of audiences—creating strong incentives for governments to diversify their communication channels.

Government communication necessarily engages with multiple media logics from long-standing relationships with institutionalized news media to the distinct dynamics of digital platforms. In this article, "conventional," "editorial," and "news media" are used interchangeably to denote institutionally embedded formats—whether print or broadcast, analogue or digital. The term digital media is used when emphasizing the technological or infrastructural dimension, encompassing formats ranging from official government websites and databases to commercially operated platforms. Social media, a subset of digital media, refers to commercially operated platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram, which operate under distinctive logics of connectivity, personalization, and data extraction. We differentiate social media analytically due to these logics, affordances, and communicative dynamics. While media convergence blurs boundaries, important differences persist in format, institutional structure, communicative function, and symbolic positioning.

In this study, normalization is treated as equivalent to institutionalization—the embedding of formal and informal norms, rules, and procedures into organizational routines. Institutionalization manifests both formally (e.g., in the structure of government organizations) and informally (e.g., in evolving communication practices). Our contribution lies not in redefining normalization, but in applying it to the context of central government communication within a hybrid media environment, framing it through the lens of strategic complementarity and with attention to institutional change and governance logics.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we establish a conceptual framework by reviewing the relevant literature. Second, we outline our theoretical argument for why social media can be expected to be

normalized in government communication. Third, we describe the methods and data used. Fourth, we present our case study of the normalization of social media in Sweden. Finally, we conclude with a summary of the findings and directions for future research.

2. Conceptual Framework

This section develops the conceptual foundation for the study by synthesizing two key ideas from the literature: the normalization of social media in government communication and the notion of strategic complementarity between different media types. We also introduce an analytical lens that distinguishes between structure and process. Together, these strands inform our conceptual framework which situates dimensions of government communication within a broader media–institutional environment.

2.1. Social Media, Structure, and Process in Government Communication

Building on the structure–process framework introduced in Section 1, this article joins other contributions on government communication at the central executive level (particularly Canel & Sanders, 2014, 2016; Sanders, 2020; Sanders & Canel, 2013). The framework for government communication analysis developed by Canel and Sanders (2013, pp. 14–16) distinguishes between structure and process. Structural elements relate to two administrative organizational dimensions: formal rules, including organizational charts specifying communication roles as well as all relevant legislation, policies, and guidance; and financial resources, including budgets and reward systems. Human resources constitute a separate structural element and include the skills, knowledge, and values of the communication workforce. Process relates to information gathering and analysis (e.g., coordination and planning mechanisms and routines), dissemination (briefings, meetings, press conferences, digital media, campaigns, and advertising), and evaluation.

Like other organizations, governments make use of different forms of media, including traditional news media and social media. Communication functions include work related to digital platforms, and greater reliance on social media means more platform-specific communication work. As Karlsen and Kolltveit (2023, p. 381) conclude, communication on social media requires nuanced attention to the "imagined" audience and, therefore, for political actors and ministerial media advisers in particular, "integrated knowledge about media logic, political logic, political strategy logic, and social media logic is essential." They call for research into how social media has affected the background, formal status, and tasks of ministerial media advisers, and whether social media skills have become a major criterion when selecting them (Karlsen & Kolltveit, 2023, p. 386).

Regardless of the policy area, government communication is essentially political, and governments instrumentalize social media for political purposes. Social media platforms have become embedded in government communication practices. At the same time, these platforms operate within broader digital infrastructures that shape public communication, institutional dynamics, and governance. Platforms—understood as systems enabling interaction between users and organizing communication through proprietary algorithms—do not all function equally in political contexts. Some, like X, play a disproportionately influential role due to their real-time dynamics and elite user networks.

Government social media communication can be differentiated into domains such as message types or adoption factors. Much of it has proven to be for informational, presentational, and symbolic purposes, as

evidenced in research on local government social media communication (e.g., DePaula et al., 2018; Ravenda et al., 2022; Silva et al., 2017). Social media usage by governments has developed into an increasingly prominent theme of research, with particular attention paid to local government and the wider public sector (e.g., Faber et al., 2020; Lovari & Valentini, 2020; Villodre et al., 2021; Wukich, 2021; Yavetz & Aharony, 2020; Zheng & Zheng, 2014).

Numerous studies demonstrate ubiquitous social media use in the public sector and advance understanding of social media adoption and its purposes, including the promotion of government initiatives. This adoption is often described as a process of adaptation to new technological environments, and in parts of the literature, it is further examined through the lens of institutionalization (e.g., Criado & Villodre, 2022; Figenschou, 2020; Mabillard et al., 2022; Mergel, 2016; Olsson & Eriksson, 2016). Distinct social media repertoires have emerged in a wide range of countries, changing professional practices. The literature consistently shows that, once adopted, social media practices are gradually normalized and institutionalized, becoming integral to both political strategy and administrative communication routines.

2.2. Strategic Complementarity and Normalization

A further conceptual pillar of our framework is strategic complementarity—the mutually reinforcing integration of traditional and digital platforms in communicative practices—linked to broader patterns of media convergence (Castells, 2009; Jenkins, 2006). This concept captures not only the diversity of media types but also the interactions and mutual influences across them. Newer media learn or borrow from older ones, and vice versa, in a continuous process of "remediation" (Bolter & Grusin, 2000) where any medium can be reshaped amid general media convergence.

In the age of hybrid media, politics is increasingly defined by actors able to blend older and newer media (Chadwick, 2011, 2017; Chadwick et al., 2018). The internet has created a new political opportunity structure linked to multiple media platforms. Political actors strategically distribute content across both traditional and social media to maximize visibility, amplify reach, and increase message impact—leveraging both journalistic attention and social media virality.

This development is well documented in research inspired by the hybrid media system approach, including studies from Sweden (Ekman & Widholm, 2024; Klinger & Svensson, 2015), Denmark (Blach-Ørsten et al., 2017; Severin-Nielsen, 2023, 2024; Severin-Nielsen et al., 2025), and Norway, where Karlsen and Enjolras (2016, p. 338) find that "the candidates who gain influence in social media are those who are able to create a synergy between traditional media channels and social media." These contributions highlight the interactivity and interdependency in politics–media relations, showing how hybridization changes the way political actors and structures conduct politics.

Strategic complementarity means that content circulates across platforms and outlets, forming hybridized patterns of government communication. Political actors have much to gain from this approach, especially as audiences migrate online and consume more news digitally. As Daniel and Obholzer (2025, p. 1) note: "Politicians have a rational incentive to keep up with voters' growing use of social media platforms. How they do so is important for democratic political communication."

Social media enables political actors to engage directly with the public and bypass conventional media, sharing unedited content that can drive traditional news coverage. This is evidenced in research on online political news coverage and the journalistic practice of embedding social media posts—especially tweets—in news articles (Oschatz et al., 2022; see also Kapidzic et al., 2022; López-Rabadán & Mellado, 2019). Social media is also a news source for newspapers and conventional media (e.g., Gioltzidou et al., 2024; Ren et al., 2022; Tewodros, 2024). Content flows in both directions: discussions starting on social media are picked up by traditional media, and broadcast content often triggers social media responses.

Normalization is closely linked to hybridity and complementarity across media. We draw here on media and journalism research, including the widely cited work of Margolis and Resnick (2000) on the "normalization of cyberspace," the idea that while the internet can be transformative, it does not exist apart from existing political and media structures (see also Davis, 2009). Governments enter online spaces to pursue political goals, influence offline political activities, and reach voters.

Reflecting the evolving nature of "cyberspace" and media technologies, research has examined how online campaigning and specific platforms such as X and Instagram have been normalized (Koc-Michalska et al., 2016; Lasorsa et al., 2012; Molyneux & Mourão, 2017; Perreault & Hanusch, 2024; see also Perreault et al., 2025). These studies show how the routine use of platforms becomes embedded in journalistic practice, with norms from older platforms transferred to new ones. This adaptation and integration of technological innovations into routines and practices is central to the normalization process.

Normalization may be partly an unintended adaptation, but it can also be a deliberate strategy, as political actors seek to capitalize on platforms for political advantage. Beyond efficiency and reach, social media reshapes the timing and rhythm of political communication, enabling real-time responses and agenda-setting independent of traditional media cycles.

The central elements of structure and process linked to strategic complementarity and normalization are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Conceptual framework: Elements of structure and process, linked to normalization and strategic complementarity.

Dimension	Elements [1]	Link to normalization	Link to strategic complementarity
Structure	Formal rules, organizational charts, regulations, budgets, and human resources	Embedding social media into formal roles, regulations, and staffing norms	Integrating social media capacity into the existing communication infrastructure
Process	Information gathering, coordination, and information dissemination and evaluation	Making social media part of everyday routines and practices	Combining platform-specific dissemination with conventional media cycles

Source: [1] Adapted from Canel and Sanders (2013).

3. Core Theoretical Argument

Governments generally may be expected to be drawn to digital media and social media platforms. But what exactly is it about social media that gives it the ability to shape government organizations' communications? Why is it that social media is normalized in government communication?

Building on, but also moving beyond, the existing body of research, we claim that the combined social media effect on government communication operates through two interconnected mechanisms: adaptation and strategic complementarity—the deliberate combination of different kinds of media. We conceptualize this as the strategic use of hybrid media logics where political actors navigate and combine the affordances of both legacy and social media. Importantly, we do not emphasize convergence as technological or institutional fusion, but rather the calculated blending of formats, audiences, and distribution logics. In the process, the executive undergoes a shift towards normalization, as social media becomes embedded in daily routine.

This normalization is shaped by actors' perceptions of the potential gains offered by emerging digital technologies. The trend of integrating social media platforms into government communication is closely linked to political parties' and governments' interest in participating in online spaces. Our theory assumes that government communication is driven by incentives to maintain and enhance capacity and capability. Digital developments have benefited politicians not only by offering new spaces for communication, but also by generating resources in their favour.

Online communication on social media is a key resource for organizations and politicians, whether in or out of government. It is both a symbolic or immaterial resource, related to public image, and a material resource, linked to technological and economic factors (e.g., Criado & Villodre, 2022; Figenschou, 2020; Jost, 2023). The adoption of social media affects not only the content and style of communication, but also how influence and authority are exercised within executive structures. These dynamics blur the boundaries between internal and external communication, challenge traditional information control, and necessitate new routines for coherence and coordination.

Therefore, the rise and usage of social media platforms offer not just an organizational resource but also a power and leadership resource, like the media in general. This causal mechanism involves the adaptation of procedures and practices to the functional requirements of online communication, with implications for the distribution of power within the executive system and for the balance of power between government and media. We will return to these implications in the concluding section.

Our theoretical argument is grounded in an extensive literature review and in observed interdependencies—both offline and online—between politics and media, and across different media types. The integration of social media into government communication is not merely a byproduct of digitalization; it is the outcome of deliberate institutional adaptation to changing media logics and to new forms of public interaction in a context of informational competition and an evolving media environment. It reflects the government's strategic capacity to respond to changes in its environment, that is, its capacity for strategic management.

If the theoretical model proposed here accurately reflects these mechanisms, we should expect to see similar patterns of strategic normalization of government social media communication across national contexts. Resource availability—symbolic, technological, and economic—is a central part of the normalization process.

4. Method and Data

We explore our argument through a case study of the effects of social media on national-level government communication in Sweden. Guided by the ambition to theoretically and empirically map social media normalization in government communication, we selected organizations and institutions in Sweden's central executive. Sweden's combination of a stable media system, high internet penetration, and strong public institutions makes it a particularly informative case for examining how social media is integrated into government communication in a consolidated democracy. Traditionally, Sweden belongs to a group of countries characterized by strong and stable media systems, robust commercial and public service media organizations, high journalistic professionalism, and broad news reach (Nord & Grusell, 2021; Wadbring & Karlsson, 2024).

Our empirical base combines secondary and primary sources. The secondary literature, previous research on Sweden's executive communication, provides essential context, drawing on extensive empirical studies of the Swedish executive system and particularly its communication functions. The primary contribution of this study rests on novel data collected through interviews and official government documents.

The interview material consists of 13 interviews with government press secretaries or senior media advisers based either in line ministries or in the prime minister's office. The study covers three political periods: the centre–right governments from 2006 to 2014 and from 2022, the social democratic–green governments from 2014 to 2021, and the social democratic government from 2021 to 2022. All but one interview were conducted face-to-face; one was held by phone. The interviews addressed day-to-day routines, evolving relationships with journalists, and the role of social media in official messaging. A separate set of questions focused on the professional use of specific platforms (e.g., Facebook, X, Instagram, and various blogs)—how they were used and for what purposes. The interviews provide a basis for identifying general tendencies and developmental patterns, with individual quotations used to illustrate either common views or particularly clear points.

In parallel, we collected parliamentary and government documents on communication including regulations, staffing guidelines, and procedural instructions. The communications policy has been updated in response to the challenges of digitalization and the documentary material is valuable for understanding the formal structure of government communication and the regulatory framework for social media use.

Taken together, the combination of interview data and official documents enables us to examine both the formal, regulatory aspects and the informal, practice-based dimensions of social media use in central government communication. This dual perspective allows us to trace how institutional frameworks interact with everyday communication routines, shaping the normalization of social media in the Swedish executive.

5. Case Study: Normalizing Government Social Media Communication in Sweden

Having outlined our conceptual framework and theoretical argument, we now turn to the Swedish case to examine how social media normalization manifests in practice. In Sweden, as in many other democracies, social media has become increasingly embedded within government communication, reflecting broader changes in the media landscape and institutional practices. Two overarching trends frame this development.

The first trend is the changing media environment. Sweden combines high internet penetration with a rapidly evolving media usage profile. A growing share of the population regularly uses social media platforms, and more people—especially the youth—get political information from sources other than mainstream news media, including influencers. Traditional broadcast and print media have adapted to platform environments, shifting towards multiplatform production (Wadbring & Karlsson, 2024). While an increasing number of Swedes use social networking services compared to radio or newspapers, conventional news media—press, radio, and television—remain important (Ohlsson, 2025). Swedish radio and television continue to enjoy the highest levels of public trust (Kuylenstierna, 2025). Political news reporting has shown remarkable stability, partly due to the inertia of journalism as a path-dependent institution (Strömbäck, 2025). Nevertheless, social media has changed the communication of political parties and politicians. It plays a more central role in parties' election campaigning, but has not replaced conventional media as the primary communication channel. Research consistently shows that, in Sweden, social media supplements rather than replaces conventional media in political communication (Bolin & Falasca, 2019; Bolin et al., 2022; Djerf-Pierre & Pierre, 2019; Nord & Grusell, 2021).

In parallel, we identify a second trend of organizational adaptation in the executive. The Swedish executive has adapted structurally and procedurally to meet the functional demands of a hybrid media environment. The government has strengthened coordination of policy and communication, restructured towards greater centralization, and expanded resources dedicated to communications—particularly through the appointment of more press secretaries (Brinde et al., 2022; K. M. Johansson, 2022; K. M. Johansson & Raunio, 2020; Salomonsen et al., 2025). These developments reflect both the pressures of media adaptation and the drive to modernize government operations through digitalization.

Our empirical analysis focuses on structure and process, following the conceptualization outlined above, to assess how social media has been normalized within the Swedish central executive and what organizational implications this has produced.

5.1. Structure

In this subsection, we will discuss organizational reforms and resource allocation, regulatory framework, and role ambiguity, as well as professional norms and coordination challenges.

On 1 January 2020, the ministries' communication activities were integrated into a joint communications department to increase uniformity across ministries. A further reorganization in 2024–2025 emphasized digitalization as a means of streamlining communication processes and modernizing operations. The department's focus includes expanding outreach on government policy—particularly via digital platforms and AI technologies. A digitalization strategy adopted in 2024 guides ongoing development of working methods and processes supported by digital technology (Government Offices of Sweden, 2025b).

Formal regulation of government communication, including social media, was introduced relatively late and generally codifies existing practice. The overarching regulatory framework is the communication policy document, first introduced in 2012 and last updated in 2024 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2024). A formal social media policy was only adopted in 2016, with revised guidance in 2025 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2025c). These documents distinguish between official accounts managed by government offices

and those maintained by ministers in a personal or party-political capacity. Ambiguity persists over whether ministers' messages are delivered in an official, private, or party capacity. This has drawn scrutiny from the parliamentary Committee on the Constitution, which has warned that use of private or party-affiliated accounts for official communication can blur lines of responsibility and hinder accountability (Swedish Riksdag, 2025).

Beyond formal rules, unwritten professional norms shape communication practices. What press secretaries do is mainly subject to executive self-regulation (E. Johansson & K. M. Johansson, 2022; K. M. Johansson, 2024a, 2024b). And political appointees, including press secretaries, operate in a politicized environment where coordination is critical—especially in coalition governments. Social media intensifies pressures on coherence and increases the importance of intra-executive integration. The government has responded by further resourcing communications and strengthening coordination mechanisms.

5.2. Process

In this part, we focus on day-to-day practices and routines that demonstrate normalization processes in action. Coordination, speed, and platform-specific strategies have become defining features of executive communication.

In regard to communication pace and real-time coordination, the interviews highlight the accelerated pace of media work driven by real-time social media dynamics. Press secretaries often start the day by scanning social media before other media. As one foreign minister's press secretary explained: "It is almost the first thing I do when I wake up, before the radio and TV thing…I wake up, turn off the alarm, scroll through Twitter." A prime minister's press secretary said: "We start texting each other at 6 am." Then it is about the most important thing or things to react to, which can originate from any platform. It usually sets the agenda for the workday.

As indicated in the interviews, press secretaries spend much of the day on social media. Social media is a tool for press secretaries to interact with journalists and others and to stay updated on events (see more in E. Johansson, 2019; E. Johansson & K. M. Johansson, 2022).

Interviews produced examples of communication across media from different governments, showing both continuity and change:

1. Fredrik Reinfeldt era (2006–2014): Press secretaries stressed the unprecedented ability for leaders to communicate directly with the public via social media, bypassing exclusive reliance on conventional media.
2. Stefan Löfven era (2014–2021): Observations about reduced journalistic resources and increased unfiltered news sharing highlighted the strategic use of social media to feed into mainstream coverage.
3. Feminist foreign policy (2014–2022): Coordinated use of both traditional media and platforms like X to promote policy internationally, linking social media posts to high-profile global coverage (e.g., *The New York Times*).
4. Ulf Kristersson era (2022–present): More assertive engagement with journalists via social media, reflecting a fully digital-aware communication style, including commentary on shifts in US media accreditation (e.g., press secretary Tom Samuelsson, X, 12 December 2024, 29 January 2025).

Press secretaries emphasize the need to integrate content creation for both traditional and digital outlets. As one of the prime minister's press secretaries put it:

> I think we see communication as communication, and don't focus so much on dividing our work based on individual channels (traditional/new media). We help produce both written comments for newspapers and tweets, for example. Not infrequently, they are quite like each other. The photos we take may be used in ministers' social media or sent to traditional journalists who publish them.

Digital skills are increasingly central to press secretary recruitment, as reflected in a recent job posting highlighting social media management and video editing as core qualifications (Moderaterna, 2025).

Table 2 provides an overview of the case study evidence.

Table 2. Case study evidence: Structure and process in Sweden's central executive communication.

Category	Key elements observed	Examples from interviews/documents
Structure	Organizational reforms (2020, 2024–2025), centralized communications, social media guidelines (2016, 2025), and resource allocation	Integration of ministries' communications into a joint department, growth in press secretaries, and revised social media guidance distinguishing official/personal accounts
Process	Real-time monitoring, coordination mechanisms, cross-platform content use, and targeted platform strategies	Six AM social media scans, coordinated tweets + traditional op-eds, feminist foreign policy promotion linking X to *The New York Times*, and Kristersson government assertive posts reacting to media coverage

In summary, the Swedish case shows how social media has evolved from a supplementary tool to a normalized component of government communication. Structural reforms, such as centralized communications and expanded resources, have combined with procedural adaptations, such as real-time coordination and platform-specific strategies, to embed social media into the core routines of executive communication. This normalization process has implications for political accountability, public engagement, and institutional transparency—issues to which we return in the concluding discussion.

6. Findings and Future Research

6.1. Findings

This article has shown that social media has become an institutionalized element of government communication—not as a replacement for legacy media, but as a complementary tool strategically integrated into existing practices. The findings represent a conceptual shift. Our study provides evidence that social media platforms are seen as complementary to, rather than a substitute for, conventional media, which continue to offer a sense of stability and normalcy. There is evidence emerging of a government finding adequate measures to cope with as well as to capitalize on the reality of increased media diversity. Diversifying its own communications, with plenty of resources for communications, confers broad benefits on the government. Our analysis contributes to understanding the institutional mechanisms through which social media becomes embedded in government operations—via new roles, routines, regulatory ambiguities,

and inter-media coordination. National governance is being transformed by new ways of working and that is in large part because of digitalization and the instrumentalization of social media; "in the age of digital media and branding" (Marland et al., 2017).

We have traced this dynamic at work through an account of governmental adaptation to social media in Sweden. While many democratic governments have adapted to the evolving media landscape, the Swedish case illustrates how normalization unfolds in a highly institutionalized communication system. This adds nuance to comparative research by highlighting the interplay between centralized governance, public service media traditions, and digital adaptation.

At the same time, there is variation across countries in media and executive systems, in political communication cultures and political-institutional conditions. Notably, the Swedish case may differ from that of countries with less centralized governments, a less established tradition of public service media, or a less developed digital communication infrastructure. These differences highlight the importance of contextual analysis when assessing the broader applicability of our findings.

We also find important ambiguities about the representational status of ministers' online activity: Are they communicating as private individuals, party members, or public office holders? The blending of personal and institutional communication challenges traditional notions of accountability and transparency in politics and government. All of which suggests that we need to pay closer attention to pertinent normative questions about the democratic process.

Taken together, these findings contribute to understanding how social media becomes embedded in governmental communication and governance processes, while also pointing towards unresolved questions that merit more research.

6.2. Future Research

Building on these conclusions, several promising avenues for future research emerge. While our findings clarify how social media becomes embedded in governmental communication, they also reveal important gaps in knowledge about its broader consequences. Addressing these gaps requires situating our results within wider comparative contexts and examining the diversity of political, institutional, and media systems.

First, we need to contextualize effects and explore interactions with other sources of change, to better understand what is driving connectivity between media as well as between government and media in different forms. There is also variation in platforms' affordances, in the ways in which they attract and shape engagement with specific types of audiences—an area where more detailed comparative analysis is needed.

The benefits of social media are well known. Research has consistently shown that social media brings benefits for political actors—giving them opportunities to reach out by directly and easily communicating through platforms, thereby becoming less dependent on mainstream news media. Less understood, however, is social media as a source of power redistribution. Social media may contribute to shifting power dynamics—both within government institutions and between political actors and the media. Understanding who benefits more than others from such redistribution requires further empirical and theoretical inquiry.

The article also generates insights into cross-media links. Given the strategic advantages and complementarity, social media can be expected to become even more important for governments, especially as platform-based digital communication continues to evolve. Besides attention to normative issues, we encourage more interdisciplinary and comparative research for a deeper understanding of the role of social media in government communication, how different media combine, and who benefits most. Government social media adoption and usage are related to power. Social media is a powerful resource—and understanding its implications for democratic governance should remain a priority for the field.

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Data Availability

The data are available from the authors upon reasonable request.

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