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REVISIÓN

The role of social media in government communication and citizen participation for sustainable governance

El papel de las redes sociales en la comunicación gubernamental y la participación ciudadana para una gobernanza sostenible

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Social networks have expanded the government's communicative practice, although their impact on both participation and the implementation of sustainable development is only manifested in the presence of institutional variables in addition to the simple presence on the network. Objectives: To analyze the role of social networks in government communication and the involvement of citizens in it, trying to highlight their contributions and limitations in the framework of sustainable governance. Methodology: 41 references covering both academic and institutional literature were reviewed. A synthesis of institutional communication, transparency, participation, digital inclusion and sustainability was made. Results: The literature analyzed distinguishes up to three types of practice in network-mediated communication -dissemination, interaction and participation-, also establishing that: the quality of information. The literature covering environmental communication, the circulation of the circular economy and the 2030 Agenda shows possibilities of mobilization in the line of sustainability, although it does not advance towards it. Conclusion: Social networks can sustain good governance and SDG 16 if they are articulated with verifiable public processes.

Keywords: social media; government communication; citizen participation; sustainable governance; transparency.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Las redes sociales han ampliado la práctica comunicativa del Gobierno, aunque su impacto tanto en la participación como en la implementación del desarrollo sostenible sólo se manifiesta en presencia de variables institucionales adicionales a la simple presencia en la red. Objetivos: Analizar el papel de las redes sociales en la comunicación gubernamental y la implicación de la ciudadanía en ella, tratando de evidenciar sus contribuciones y limitaciones en el marco de gobernanza sostenible. Metodología: Se revisaron 41 referencias que abarcan tanto la literatura académica como la institucional. Se realizó una síntesis de la comunicación institucional, la transparencia, la participación, la inclusión digital y la sostenibilidad. Resultados: La literatura analizada distingue hasta tres tipos de práctica en la comunicación mediada por la red -difusión, interacción y participación-, estableciendo, además, que: la calidad de la información. La literatura que abarca la comunicación ambiental, la circulación de la economía circular y la Agenda 2030 muestra posibilidades de movilización en la línea de la sostenibilidad, aunque no avanza hacia la misma. Conclusión: Las redes sociales pueden sostener una buena gobernanza y el ODS 16 si se articulan con procesos públicos verificables.

Palabras clave: redes sociales; comunicación gubernamental; participación ciudadana; gobernanza sostenible; transparencia.

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INTRODUCTION

The digitalization of public administration has transformed how organizations produce information, deliver services and interact with citizens. This transformation is not merely a matter of incorporating technologies; it also requires developing management capacities, coordinating internal functions and establishing accountability criteria. The OECD notes that digital government must integrate technology, institutional organization and people's needs[1]. Social media are a clear expression of these changes: they make it possible to communicate, via government decisions, in a context where the response is increasingly received in a public space and circulates at a growing pace. Even so, the rapid relationship of information technologies does not guarantee a more open administration.

The adoption of these platforms has followed different organizational trajectories. Mergel and Bretschneider described a process of experimentation, formalization and institutionalization of their use in government[2], whereas Mergel examined the tactics developed by United States federal agencies and the possibilities for interaction in the public sector[3,4]. Medaglia and Zheng identified the need for more in-depth research on the characteristics of users, platforms and their effects, rather than focusing the analysis exclusively on official accounts[5]. Subsequent research has shown that the lack of governance frameworks and other administrative barriers hinder the stable incorporation of these technologies[6,7]. For this reason, the modernization of government communication should be assessed by its actual practices and not solely by the digital resources available.

Transparency and accountability are part of the expectations associated with digital communication. Social media enable the publication of budgets, programs, actions, and institutional explanations, but the circulation of content does not necessarily mean that it is understood or used for citizen oversight. An analysis of Spanish ministries and agencies found differences in the roles that these organizations adopt on Twitter [8]. In another context, Arshad and Khurram examined the relationships among information quality, transparency, trust, and digital political participation, showing that these components are related in distinct ways [9]. Regular posting is therefore an operational condition, not a sufficient demonstration of effective transparency.

Citizen participation poses an additional interpretive challenge. Reactions, comments and direct messages reflect observable behaviours on platforms, but they do not automatically establish whether the public's contributions influence public decisions. A systematic review of citizen engagement on public-sector social media identified a variety of factors and interaction models[10]. In a complementary vein, an analysis of government listening programmes highlights the value of interpreting the demands of social actors and translating them into institutional learning[11]. The participatory potential of digital environments therefore depends both on the opportunities to express demands and on how administrations respond to those contributions.

The relationship between digitalization and sustainability has broadened the debate on how public institutions function. Sustainable development requires capacities to coordinate social, economic and environmental priorities and to maintain legitimate and inclusive decision-making processes. Glass and Newig found associations between certain governance characteristics and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals [12]. Del Río Castro and colleagues noted that the convergence between digital technologies and sustainability encompasses both opportunities and risks that must be assessed in an integrated manner [13]. Along the same lines, strategic communication for sustainability requires building collaborative and trust-based relationships that enable institutions and social actors to connect with the challenges of the 2030 Agenda [14].

Sustainable Development Goal 16 offers a reference point for examining the institutional dimension of these processes. Its targets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10 relate, respectively, to effective, accountable and transparent institutions; inclusive and participatory decision-making; and public access to information. Studying government social media can help clarify some conditions associated with these targets, but their activity metrics do not replace official indicators of progress. Research on digital governance and sustainability emphasizes that the contribution of technology is mediated by administrative capacities and specific social contexts[15]. Similarly, the United Nations E-Government Survey warns of persistent inequalities in access, capacities and availability of digital services[16].

Applications related to environmental issues show why communication and material effects need to be distinguished. Research on government posts concerning the SDGs in China has identified variations in user responses depending on message content [17]. In Japan, researchers have examined associations between the characteristics of official posts and digital engagement regarding low-carbon practices [18]. For the circular economy, analysis of public communications on

X also reveals differences among educational content, promotional messages and user interactions [19]. This evidence informs the study of sustainability communication, but it does not demonstrate that an increase in digital reactions is equivalent to verifiable changes in environmental conditions.

In Latin America, the link between communication, institutional innovation and sustainability must take into account territorial inequality and the capacities of local governments. Gómez Díaz de León and de la Garza-Montemayor identified the challenges and opportunities of social media in public administration20, while regional studies on participatory governance, transparency and municipal management point to the importance of strengthening processes of institutional openness21,22,23. In these contexts, platforms can facilitate the dissemination of programs, consultations and community needs, but inequalities in connectivity, trust and administrative resources restrict equitable participation.

The scientific literature has examined the institutional adoption of social media, its forms of interaction, transparency mechanisms and its applications to environmental problems. However, the findings are scattered across heterogeneous designs and contexts, and frequently rely on indicators that describe digital activity without establishing sustained governance outcomes. It is worth integrating these contributions critically, distinguishing between dissemination capacities, opportunities for participation and the conditions under which they can be linked to sustainability objectives. In this context, this article aims to analyze, through a literature review, the role of social media in government communication and citizen participation in order to identify their contributions, limitations and opportunities for strengthening sustainable governance.

METHODOLOGY

The study was designed as a structured narrative review of the scientific literature, with a qualitative approach and a descriptive-analytical scope. The review examined the relationship between government social media, public communication, transparency, citizen participation and sustainable governance, drawing on empirical studies, conceptual contributions, previous reviews and institutional documents. A thematic synthesis was chosen because the publications differ in design, units of analysis and ways of measuring digital interaction. No meta-analysis was performed, and no pooled effect sizes were estimated. The methodology is not presented as a systematic review or bibliometric mapping, since no reproducible record of all searches and screening decisions is available.

Document collection drew on the sources and databases mentioned in the original manuscript, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect and SpringerLink, as well as institutional publications. The thematic review was broadened to include literature on digital governance, public innovation, sustainable development, environmental communication and the Sustainable Development Goals. The guiding concepts were the expressions “social media”, “government communication”, “digital government”, “citizen engagement”, “citizen participation”, “transparency”, “sustainable governance” and “sustainable development”, together with their Spanish equivalents. These terms describe the axes used to identify sources and do not constitute a single search string that can be retrospectively attributed to an exhaustive search conducted across all databases.

The literature selection prioritized publications in Spanish and English related to public institutions, citizen participation, transparency, digital platforms, institutional sustainability and socio-environmental issues. Preference was given to studies published between 2020 and 2026, with earlier works included when they were necessary to understand the conceptual evolution of the field. The criteria considered were an identifiable publisher, relevance to the review question, methodological clarity and the retrievability of bibliographic data. Sources devoted exclusively to commercial marketing or unrelated to government activity or sustainability were deliberately excluded. Reports from international organizations provided institutional and regulatory context.

The working bibliographic corpus comprised 41 distinct references, which should not be interpreted as a count of studies obtained through a documented systematic process. The sources were classified by function: research on the functioning of government social media; studies on transparency and participation; works on sustainability and environmental communication; and conceptual or institutional documents. This classification avoided treating reviews, observational studies, experiments, analyses of digital posts and public policy reports as equivalent. The thematic extraction considered the study context, the objective, the methodological approach, the main reported findings and the limitations relevant to interpretation.

The analysis was organized around five interrelated dimensions: government communication

and platform institutionalization, transparency and accountability, citizen participation and inclusion, applications to sustainability problems, and digital governance barriers. These dimensions are consistent with discussions of public participation and the SDGs12, the convergence between digitalization and sustainability13, and citizen engagement in the public sector10. The information was compared qualitatively to identify convergences, discrepancies, and gaps, with particular attention to the distinction between information availability, digital interaction, the incorporation of citizen input, and actual public policy outcomes.

The link to sustainable development was examined through targets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10 of SDG 16, which were used as an interpretive reference and not as variables measured in this study. Research on environmental policy communication, participation in low-carbon practices, the circular economy, urban planning and resilience was also considered. The synthesis did not assign selection figures by database, did not produce a PRISMA flow diagram, and did not attribute quality assessments or inter-rater agreement that are not documented. The conclusions were restricted to relationships supported by the identified literature and to conceptual implications, without extrapolating causality from descriptive or correlational studies.

RESULTS

The synthesis of the publications identified a recurrent divide between the informational use of social media and the capacity of these tools to facilitate substantive participation processes. Technology adoption progresses unevenly and is conditioned by internal regulations, resources, responsibilities and administrative structures2,6. Platforms can accelerate the dissemination of public services and decisions, but their interactive potential is not necessarily exploited in all institutions. A comparison of European local governments indicates that administrative traditions also influence models of institutionalization7. This evidence suggests that evaluating government communication requires examining how internal processes work and how institutions respond, in addition to quantifying account activity.

In New Zealand local governments, Alam and colleagues analyzed 687 Facebook posts from two administrations and found that informational content predominated over posts aimed at encouraging greater participation [24]. Findings of a different kind, obtained by comparing Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram in Dutch municipalities, show that interaction varies with platform characteristics and the policy areas addressed [25]. In Malaysia, a study of ministerial communication on Facebook also identified differences in participation depending on content type and the ways institutions responded [26]. Taken together, these studies reveal that the number of posts does not equate to a uniform opportunity for deliberation and that activity indicators need to be interpreted in light of the communicative purpose.

An analysis of Spanish government bodies shows that ministries and agencies may play different roles in disseminating information via Twitter [8]. A framework for analyzing forms of government interaction makes it possible to distinguish the content, structure and function of messages27, while research on participation during emergencies highlights that communicative repertoires change depending on the public problem and the response stage28. These findings delineate different levels of use: one-way information, responses to queries and collaborative actions. Observable interaction is evidence of contact, although it can be considered influential participation only when its relationship with public decision-making procedures is substantiated.

Listening capacity and organizational adaptation also emerge as relevant factors. The study by Canel et al. on a government program emphasizes the importance of institutional learning gained through listening and reflection on relationships with citizen groups11. Dobija et al. analyze adaptive communication linked to accountability in digital environments and show the relevance of tailoring messages and procedures to the issues at hand29. These studies agree that a communication strategy does not end with publication: institutions need to interpret requests, produce understandable responses, and justify their decisions. Consequently, digital activity is more informative when it is linked to specific procedures for handling, follow-up, and evaluation.

Research on transparency makes it possible to distinguish available information from the conditions sufficient for participation. Arshad and Khurram observed associations between the quality of official information, perceived transparency, trust and digital political participation9. Zhao and colleagues, drawing on changes to a municipal collaboration platform in Sacramento, identified favorable effects of transparency on certain participation activities, although these effects varied over time and by socioeconomic group30. In survey experiments, Hsu found that operational transparency can modify perceptions and understanding of institutional actions without necessarily

producing greater collaboration33. These differences indicate that information disclosure needs to be accompanied by concrete opportunities for response and follow-up, since trust and interaction are not mechanically related.

Digital participation mechanisms vary in scope. Shin et al. examined 116 tools designed to facilitate citizen input and described features for recording opinions, identifying problems and formulating proposals, along with gaps in reporting on the implementation of decisions31. Ataman et al. developed an approach for evaluating participation processes in data-driven urban practices and highlighted the importance of inclusion and follow-up34. In a later conceptual proposal, Goncalves et al. emphasize that the design of the participatory process should precede the choice of digital tools35. In light of these sources, the availability of a form or a space for comments is a limited condition: substantive participation requires clear rules for responding and traceability of how contributions are used.

Table 1. Representative studies on government communication and participation

Study	Setting and design	Relevant finding
Alam et al. [24]	New Zealand; analysis of Facebook posts by two local governments.	Predominance of information dissemination over content oriented toward active participation.
Arshad and Khurram [9]	Pakistan; survey of followers of institutional social media accounts.	Differentiated relationships between information, transparency, trust and participation.
Criado and Villodre [6]	Spain; study of institutionalization barriers in local governments.	Governance and organizational resources shape institutional use.
Zhao et al. [30]	United States; quasi-experimental analysis of a municipal platform.	Transparency may stimulate participation, with unequal effects and distribution.
Shin et al. [31]	International context; analysis of 116 participatory tools.	Frequent limitations in decision follow-up and feedback of results.
Liang et al. [18]	Japan; analysis of publications on low-carbon practices.	The type of information was associated with interactions, with no corresponding environmental change.
Guo et al. [17]	China; analysis of institutional publications on the 2030 Agenda.	Digital response varied by SDG and message function.
Yuan and Shen [32]	China; digital interactions about air pollution.	The formulation of demands was associated with administrative responses.

Note. Prepared from the cited publications; it does not represent an original measurement.

Nor does citizen engagement depend exclusively on government-promoted initiatives. Schwoerer examined the role of social media in public participation related to rulemaking procedures and identified forms of mobilization not anticipated in official channels36. Zhang et al. analyzed the factors involved in decisions to participate in public data governance and highlighted the influence of individual valuations and costs37. These findings help explain why a technically available platform may receive very different levels of participation: people's motivations, perceived usefulness, expectations of a response, and material conditions of access also influence its use.

In crisis settings, government communication takes on the role of providing immediate guidance and reducing uncertainty. Chen et al. analyzed engagement with government social networks during the COVID-19 pandemic and observed differences associated with the types of content posted38. Another study on Shanghai examined the relationships between informational, service-oriented and participatory uses of social media and variables such as citizen satisfaction and compliance with public health measures39. Wang et al. identified the importance of source credibility and perceived transparency for understanding engagement with mobile government social networks during emergencies40. In Spain, the study of collaboration on Twitter during the health crisis likewise documents the possibilities for public communication and interaction in exceptional situations28. These findings confirm the relevance of platforms for conveying timely guidance, but they do not eliminate the need for alternative channels and verification protocols.

Specific applications emerge when public communication is linked to sustainability. Guo et al. investigated messages on 2030 Agenda goals that Chinese government agencies disseminated via Weibo and found that responses differed according to the topic and communicative function of the messages [17]. Liang et al. examined Japanese posts related to low-carbon practices and observed that informational content and topic mattered more than a mere increase in multimedia resources [18]. Li et al. studied public communication about the circular economy on X and described relationships between informational elaboration, tone and forms of engagement [19]. In these three domains, digital dissemination can make opportunities for action visible, but the

metrics recorded on the platforms describe interactions and do not directly demonstrate changes in emissions, waste or consumption patterns.

A study on air pollution in Chinese cities found relationships between how citizen demands were formulated and the characteristics of government responses32. This finding complements environmental research focused on official posts, since it reminds us that citizens also act as senders of information, requests and warnings. Applications of digital communication for mobility, waste management, urban planning or environmental quality require procedures for processing these contributions. Without administrative follow-up mechanisms, platforms may function as repositories of concerns with no verifiable connection to the resolution of territorial problems.

Table 2. Dimensions of digital communication and their relationships with sustainable governance

Dimension	Potential contribution	Indicative indicators
Institutional communication	Timely and understandable public information for different groups.	Updating; accessibility; clarity and traceability of content.
Transparency and accountability	Greater knowledge of actions taken and opportunities for public oversight.	Publication of decisions; justification; monitoring mechanisms.
Citizen participation	Expression of demands and exchange between the community and institutions.	Queries answered; incorporation of contributions; reporting back of results.
Digital inclusion	Reduction of territorial, linguistic, and accessibility barriers.	Alternative channels; accessibility; coverage; linguistic diversity.
Institutional and territorial sustainability	Communication and monitoring of public actions on SDGs and environmental issues.	Policy consultation; monitoring of initiatives; relevant public indicators.

Note. Compiled from the cited publications; does not represent an original measurement.

The relationship between digital governance and sustainability is mediated by an institutional structure broader than social media. Glass and Newig examined links between participation, policy coherence and democratic institutions, and outcomes associated with the SDGs12. Tariq et al. systematized the literature on sustainable digital governance and highlighted the technological, social and organizational conditions involved in these processes15. Canel's approach to communication and the 2030 Agenda positions collaboration and trust-based relationships as components that cannot be reduced to published messages14. Within this framework, targets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10 of SDG 16 make it possible to identify thematic connections with transparency, inclusive decision-making and access to information, although no count of digital interactions can substitute for the official indicators of these targets.

Evidence on Latin American local governments adds institutional and social constraints. The review by Huayra Romero and Contreras Rivera identifies opportunities for and barriers to participation and transparency platforms in local administration41. Quecaño Condori and Dominguez Pillaca examine citizen participation and social development in municipal management, highlighting challenges related to trust and engagement22. Sánchez Bardales and colleagues analyze the functions of open government in Peruvian municipalities23, while Gamarra addresses the relationships among participatory governance, transparency, and institutional innovation in the region21. Taken together, these sources show that technological adoption should be examined alongside administrative culture, response capacities, legitimacy, and territorial conditions; findings from other countries should not be transferred without qualification.

Digital inclusion emerges as a cross-cutting condition. Comparative studies of local governments and participatory platforms report that engagement varies with technological capacities, user profiles and available channels24,25,30. The United Nations has documented persistent disparities in digital public services and accessibility, which may limit the participation of populations with connectivity difficulties or limited digital skills16. Therefore, communicating more services exclusively through social media could raise institutional visibility among connected groups while simultaneously restricting opportunities for other sectors. Equitable access requires complementing platforms with in-person mechanisms, accessible information and alternative means of participation.

The synthesis identifies five related but conceptually distinct dimensions: institutionalization, informational communication, transparency, participation, and sustainability-oriented inclusion. Institutionalization determines whether stable rules and resources are in place; communication facilitates the availability of information; transparency incorporates explanations and follow-up; participation entails responding to and processing contributions; and inclusion seeks to reduce the barriers that distribute these opportunities unequally. The literature provides more direct evidence on patterns of publication and interaction than on sustained changes in decisions, environmental

performance, or territorial well-being. For this reason, a distinction is drawn between potential contributions and demonstrated sustainability outcomes.

Table 3. Scope of the evidence and caveats for its interpretation

Aspect analyzed	What the literature supports	What requires additional evidence
Dissemination and interaction	Platforms broaden channels and show different responses depending on content and context.	That interactions modify public decisions or outcomes.
Transparency	The disclosure and clarity of information may be related to trust and engagement.	Persistence of effects and verifiable improvements in accountability.
Participation	Mechanisms for consultation, collaboration and digital mobilization are in place.	Representative inclusion and monitoring of the use of citizen input.
Sustainability	Digital communication can support policies and mobilization on the SDGs and environmental issues.	Verifiable reductions in environmental impacts or improvements in SDG indicators.

Note. Prepared on the basis of the cited publications; it does not represent an original measurement.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that the contribution of social media to sustainable governance depends on their incorporation into administrative structures capable of sustaining communication and responding to public demands. The institutionalization process described by Mergel and Bretschneider2should not be interpreted as an automatic progression toward participatory models, since the barriers identified by Criado and Villodre6may keep use focused on dissemination, even in organizations with a consolidated digital presence. The comparison across European governments7reinforces this interpretation by situating these practices within different administrative traditions. Consequently, the existence of official profiles is a feature of communication infrastructure; governance is tested when these channels are connected to public functions, identifiable responsibilities and follow-up mechanisms.

The gap between the amount of activity and the quality of participation is one of the most persistent points of agreement. Studies conducted in New Zealand, the Netherlands and Malaysia show that citizen responses vary by platform, message type and opportunity for intervention24,25,26. From an organizational perspective, Mergel's framework of public sector interactions and Wukich's typology make it possible to examine the distinct functions of these activities3,27. The implication for public management is that the number of followers, comments or posts should not be assumed equivalent to a deliberative process. Assessing meaningful participation requires knowing whether there is a timely response and whether the information received is used in verifiable administrative decisions.

Findings on transparency also caution against oversimplified associations. The positive relationships identified between information, trust and participation9and the changes observed on a municipal platform after data availability was increased30point to possibilities for action, but experiments on operational transparency suggest that its effects do not always translate into collaboration33. These differences may depend on the context, the kind of information and the type of participation assessed. Accountability demands more than communicating what has been done: it requires justifying decisions, facilitating follow-up and enabling channels for public review. Target 16.6 of SDG 16 should therefore be linked to institutional quality rather than to the frequency of publication.

In digital participation, a common limitation arises at the end of the process rather than at its outset. Tools can collect proposals and opinions, but they do not always report how decisions incorporated them or why they were discarded [31]. Urban participation and planning approaches that prioritize process design over tool selection help resolve this disconnect [34,35]. Studies on citizen mobilization in regulatory procedures and on data governance add that users' motivations, expectations and perceived costs also shape their engagement [36,37]. Target 16.7 therefore refers to inclusion in decision-making processes, not to the indiscriminate recording of digital interactions.

In the area of environmental sustainability, the evidence on the 2030 Agenda, low-carbon practices and the circular economy points to specific opportunities, but it also shows that reaction metrics have a limited scope17,18,19. The relevance of the content and its link to concrete public problems may matter more than the visual presentation of the messages. This finding is consistent with the convergence between digitalization and sustainability discussed by del Río Castro and colleagues13, although it requires a distinction between informational interest and

observable changes in production, consumption or environmental behavior. Institutions should link communication to material indicators relevant to each policy, without attributing to platforms effects that the available research cannot demonstrate.

Responsiveness also plays a central role when communication addresses territorial problems. Studies of air pollution show that the formulation of citizen demands is related to characteristics of official responses32, while government listening processes reflect possibilities for institutional learning11. This relationship matters for issues of mobility, waste, water, air quality or risk management: citizen messages can provide localized information, but their public usefulness depends on procedures to validate, prioritize and respond to it. In crises and emergencies, evidence from different contexts confirms the value of rapid communication, although it also stresses the need for credibility and coherent protocols28,38,39,40.

Digital inclusion is a structural challenge for any governance model that seeks to serve the entire population equitably. The socioeconomic and technological differences observed between communities [24,30] and the inequalities described in the United Nations report16show that participating in open platforms does not imply having equal opportunities to do so. Public policy should take into account accessibility, language, connectivity and alternative channels. In Latin America, research on open government, local transparency and municipal management extends this caution by showing that trust and administrative capacities can limit even formally available participatory mechanisms21,22,23,41. Without such support, a strategy centered on social media risks giving visibility mainly to the demands of better-connected groups.

The theoretical contribution of this review lies in distinguishing a chain of conditions, without proposing a proven causal relationship: organizational capacities make consistent communication possible; transparency helps make information understandable and verifiable; listening and follow-up mechanisms create opportunities for participation; and inclusion determines which sectors can use those opportunities. Sustainable governance frameworks suggest that these conditions are compatible with the institutional strengthening promoted by SDG 16 [12,14,15]. However, the existence of publications describing associations between variables is not enough to establish that an increase in social media interactions produces improvements in institutions, territories, or environmental indicators.

This review has limitations. The body of publications is heterogeneous and includes content analyses, surveys, experiments, case studies, conceptual frameworks, previous reviews and institutional documents. The literature was compiled as a narrative review and lacks a documented search and screening record that would support its comprehensiveness. Part of the evidence comes from digital collaboration platforms that are conceptually comparable, but not identical, to traditional social media. In addition, many studies measure interaction, perception or satisfaction, whereas few account for the sustained incorporation of citizen input into public decision-making or for territorial effects. Future studies should test these relationships through longitudinal designs and comparable assessments of institutional performance, policy outcomes and territorial inclusion, particularly in Latin American local governments.

CONCLUSIONS

The review made it clear that social media expand the possibilities for government communication and contact with the community, but that the role the studies attribute to them in sustainable governance is conditioned by institutional capacities and procedures that do not depend solely on online presence. The documents reviewed agree in distinguishing between the dissemination of information, digital interaction and participation that has an impact on public management. The first makes it possible to gain visibility; the second allows for exchange; the third requires verifiable mechanisms to process demands, justify decisions and communicate results.

The concepts of yelp transparency and yelp participation are significant dimensions for analyzing the link between government communication and SDG 16, mainly in relation to targets 16.6, 16.7 and 16.10. However, reactions, comments and reach indicators are not sufficient to prove that institutions have greater responsibility or that decisions incorporate the input obtained. An appropriate public strategy oriented toward sustainability should connect the prerogatives of understandable information with the responses themselves, with follow-up on the various actions, and with opportunities to seek more representative participation.

Studies on environmental communication, the circular economy and low-carbon practices show that platforms can contribute to the visibility of sustainability policies and can mobilize certain responses from citizens. The usefulness of platforms depends on the nature of the content,

the context in which it is presented to users and the type of platform itself; it is therefore not synonymous with material change in social or environmental conditions. Gaps in connectivity, platform use, accessibility and digital competence also make it necessary to maintain alternatives that enable involvement in spaces where citizens do not usually participate.

Because of its narrative nature and the resulting heterogeneity of the studies consulted, this review does not seek to provide overall effect estimates, nor can it support inferences about causal relationships between digital activity (in this case, social media activity) and outcomes related to sustainable development. There is sufficient evidence to state that social media can serve as complementary tools for open, inclusive and evaluable public management, provided that they are embedded in administrative processes relating to public disclosure, participation and monitoring. Further research linking public communication with effective decisions and verifiable outcomes in territorial contexts is needed, particularly in Latin America.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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