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# Mayor Warns of the Pitfalls in Social Media

By **MICHAEL M. GRYNBAUM**

On Twitter, he is @MikeBloomberg, a popular online avatar with more than 230,000 followers. His official [Foursquare account](#) leaves tips about Shake Shack and Kennedy International Airport. And his [Facebook page](#) energetically promotes the programs and values of New York City Hall.

But the actual Mayor [Michael R. Bloomberg](#)? When it comes to social media, he has a few concerns.

In a [speech](#) on Wednesday in Singapore, where he received a prize for urban sustainability, Mr. Bloomberg spoke about the difficulties of leading a city into the future amid a political culture that is often focused on the short term.

The mayor noted that technology, despite its benefits, can add new pitfalls to an already grueling process. "Social media is going to make it even more difficult to make long-term investments" in cities, Mr. Bloomberg said.

"We are basically having a referendum on every single thing that we do every day," he said. "And it's very hard for people to stand up to that and say, 'No, no, this is what we're going to do,' when there's constant criticism, and an election process that you have to look forward to and face periodically."

Later, Mr. Bloomberg noted that long-term urban planning "requires leadership, and standing up, and saying, 'You know, you elected me, this is what we're going to do,' and not take a referendum on every single thing."

At that, the mayor's interlocutor, the Singaporean professor Kishore Mahbubani, took back the microphone.

"I think the Singapore government sympathizes with your point about social media," Professor Mahbubani said, prompting loud laughter from the audience. "We are having the

same daily referendums in Singapore.”

Mr. Bloomberg was still traveling in Southeast Asia on Wednesday and unavailable to elaborate on his comments. But his aides at City Hall said the mayor had been speaking narrowly about how social media can shift the public discourse away from long-term thinking.

“The immediacy of social media, he has found, creates both opportunities — for information-sharing and for citizen empowerment — and challenges, for governments, for businesses, for media, to see beyond the next tweet, or the next blog post,” Howard Wolfson, a deputy mayor, said in an interview.

“It’s more about planning for the next 20 years as opposed to the next 20 minutes,” Mr. Wolfson added. He declined to name specific policies of the Bloomberg administration that had been affected by a rough online reception.

At City Hall, Mr. Bloomberg, who made his fortune in information technology, has avidly embraced social media. He hired the city’s first full-time chief digital officer and persuaded Cornell to open an engineering campus on Roosevelt Island. He also frequently promotes the city as a prime destination for talent in the growing field of tech start-ups.

His administration has not been hesitant to use Facebook and Twitter as potent political tools: Last month, amid a controversy over financing for Planned Parenthood, the mayor announced a donation to the group in a Twitter message, generating thousands of replies on various social media outlets.

Andrew Rasiej, the founder of [Personal Democracy Media](#), a group that studies how technology is changing politics, said he admired the mayor’s engagement with social media. But he said he could also empathize with Mr. Bloomberg’s concerns.

“He is expressing the difficulties and the challenges of using social media in an effective way in governing,” Mr. Rasiej said in an interview. “But I also want to encourage him to say the technology also offers an opportunity to build a better and more robust democracy.”

