E-Policy, Law and Governance: Minitrack introduction

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This minitrack is a direct successor to the previous e-policy, law and governance minitrack in the e-government cluster. Papers in this minitrack address how public policies, laws and governance are related to the use and development of information and communication technologies (ICT) both in government and in society at large. Government policies and legislation can create the technological environment and the necessary boundaries for e-government and e-democracy applications and services. At the organizational level, this includes aspects of equal access rights, privacy protection, public safety, security, and information dissemination. In the context of government information systems and at the infrastructure level, it encompasses the introduction of national ID cards, central citizen registries, data centers, public key infrastructure and Internet-based infrastructure. Policy issues and their analysis pertain to the digital divide, infrastructure development, use of open source and standards and educational uses of ICT. This minitrack also addresses e-policies related to national development.

Governance refers to the system of directing and controlling the actions, affairs, policies and functions of a political unit, organization, or nation. E-governance is getting more attention, as it has the potential to ensure that the spending of public money is not only done in an effective and efficient way but should also ensure the spending can be accounted for. This would create a dynamic, creative public sector capable of anticipating on and being open, responsive, adaptive, democratic and accountable for their action, facilitating customer preferences.

The first paper in this minitrack Examining the socio-economic determinants of Broadband adopters and non-adopters in the United Kingdom by Jyoti Choudri and Yogesh K. Dwivedi presents the findings of a self-administrated, postal questionnaire. The findings of the survey support the view that socio-economic attributes such as age, gender, education, incomes and occupation have an imperative role in explaining the adoption of broadband in households.

In the second paper, Emerging Issues in United States Telecommunications Policy: An Analysis of Federal Communications Commission Activity, Satya Prakash Saraswat and William T. Schiano explores unforeseen issues that emerged since the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 in the USA. The authors utilizes content analysis of Federal Communication Commission news releases to identify and categories the most import emerging regulatory issues and discuss implications of the focus of the Federal Communications Commission for the design, management and deployment of network based information technology.

Three different approaches to a fundamental legal issues, the definition of the exact time of a communication is received by an agency, are examined in Time, Space, and Documents – Principles for e-government regulation by Gustaf Johnsson. The three approaches, spatial analogies, availability and retrieval fail to provide sufficient guidance to system designers. An alternative approach is offered based on the concept of functional equivalence, which results in recommendations for information systems design.

Although the number of accepted papers in this minitrack is limited this year, we have all by all three very interesting papers covering important issues in the field of e-policy, law and governance. We hope that HICSS will again be an ideal spot for discussing, meeting with peers and exchanging ideas in the field of e-policy, lay and governance.