Introduction to the Open Government, Transparency and Citizen Engagement Minitrack

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This mini-track focuses on the interactions between citizens, government, and technology to promote, facilitate, and create open and transparent government. More specifically, this mini-track focuses on the dimensions the ways in which Digital Democracy are supported and furthered through open and transparent government, citizen engagement, and direct involvement of citizens in the development, use, and assessment of e-Government initiatives and systems. This mini-track brings together streams of research on this topic, while simultaneously offering a platform for emerging and innovative research in this subject. In its second year, this mini-track continues to draw considerable attention and the papers reflect a wide range of openness and transparency topics. The HICSS-45 (2012) mini-track contains five papers representing different methodologies, theories, conceptualizations, and assessment of open government, transparency and citizen engagement.

In his paper “Identifying Informational Needs for Open Government: The Case of Egypt,” Ralf Kilschewski offers a perspective on understanding information needs of citizens and stakeholders for open access to data and information. The paper particularly focuses on the role of social media in political transformation. The findings suggest that both government and citizens can agree on basic principles of information sharing and use of social media for information sharing purposes to foster transparency.

The second paper “E-Participation and Social Change: Are Local Governments Actively Promoting Responsible Behaviors and Offering Opportunities for Citizen Involvement?” co-authored by Sonia Royo, Basilio Acerete, and Ana Yetano, investigates the extent to which Internet-enabled technologies may increase citizen participation in government decision-making and stop the decline of trust in political institutions. This explores EU local governments’ use of the Internet to promote e-participation and environmental-friendly behaviors among their citizens. The results show that the developments on e-participation are higher in those areas just giving information than in the areas related to interactivity.

The third paper “Assessing Transparency in Government: Rhetoric, Reality, and Desire”, co-authored by Greta Nasi and Maria Cucciniello, addresses the tension between transparency as a value and an essential tool to enhance governments’ accountability, as a principle to activate for reducing corruption, and as a mean to diffuse government’s performance information. The paper assesses the degree of transparency in governments and ascertains which types of information external stakeholders, citizens in particular, are able to access to evaluate their government's performance.

Yannis Charalabidis, David Osimo, Fenareti Lampathaki, and Gianluca Misuraca, in their paper “ICT for Governance and Policy Modeling: Research Challenges and Future Projects in Europe,” explore the role of collaborative technologies for empowering citizens and fostering citizen engagement. The paper concludes that ICT tools have the potential to effectively support policy modeling and governance and their use is growing continuously even if they still are as yet fully realized in a number of key developmental, management, and policy areas.

The final paper “Measurement of Open Government: Metrics and Process” by John Carlo Bertot, Patrice McDermott, and Ted Smith, develops a methodology and metrics for measuring open government initiatives. The paper presents preliminary findings using a measurement tool the study team developed, discusses the lessons learned using the instrument, and issues associated with collaborative measurement development.