Introduction to the Open Government and Participation Minitrack

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Open government is an approach that purposefully emphasizes and re-invigorates the basic principle of a "government of the people, for the people, and by the people". Through information technology and committed administrative leadership and policies, countries around the world have now entered an era of unprecedented transparency intended to lead to more responsibility, accountability, and collaborative and participatory government, and to increase the integrity of public officials. Additionally, involvement of citizens in the iterative design and evaluation of e-Government systems leads to more effective digital tools for civic engagement and participation in the long run.

As e-Government becomes more ubiquitous, many questions arise about the development and maintenance of open and transparent government, citizen engagement in participatory government, notions of governance through transparency initiatives, co-design of open and collaborative government, and how governments and governmental institutions might be influenced through open government and transparency efforts. This year the Open Government and Participation minitrack includes six papers that reflect considerable geographical and methodological diversity.

"From Open Data to Open Innovation Strategies: Creating e-Services Using Open Government Data," by Calvin Chan, presents a case study of an open data initiative in Singapore. The author advocates "open innovation" in which innovative endeavors are not just located "within the boundary of an organisation." He examines how an open government portal accomplishes two things: "creating an open innovation platform," and "enticing the participation of potential partners."

"Swiss Executive Authorities on Open Government Data – Policy Making beyond Transparency and Participation," by Alessia C. Neuroni, Reinhard Riedl, and Jérôme Brugger, uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to measure how executive authorities view the state of open government data initiatives in Switzerland. They find that executives in government are primarily interested in streamlining efficiency, lowering costs associated with data management, gaining a more holistic view by integrating data sets, and collecting new ideas about what can be done with data.

"eParticipation in Practice in Europe: The Case of ‘Puzzled by Policy: Helping you be Part of EU,’" by Elena Sanchez-Nielsen, Deirdre Lee, and Eleni Panopoulou, is a case study in the European Union arguing that building innovative ICT platforms should follow from understanding levels of citizen participation, including "e-enabling," "e-engaging," and "e-empowering." The paper introduces the "Inform-Consult-Empower" model, which integrates offline engagement with e-Participation. They conclude by saying that evaluation of e-Participation systems is still a "new frontier for most governments."

"Design Teams as Change Agents: Diplomatic Design in the Open Data Movement," by Misa Maruyama, Sara Douglas, and Scott Robertson, is a case study of a nonprofit organization in the U.S. as it engages with a city to collaboratively design an open government system. The paper argues that technology change in this context also involves organizational and social change. According to the authors, in successful engagements “government agencies must release useful and accessible data, developers must use the data to build tools, and citizens must adopt the technology.”

"Identifying Participants’ Roles in Open Government Platforms and its Impact on Community Growth," by Giordano Koch, Katja Hutter, Peter Decarli, and Dennis Hilgers, uses social network analysis (SNA) to identify and describe several roles in an open government platform in Germany. They specifically describe "motivator," "attention attractor," "idea generator," "communicator," "master," and "passive user," roles and explain how these roles develop over time as the network grows.

"Extending Argument Maps To Provide Decision Support For Rulemaking," by Keith Walker and Douglas Oard, extends the technique of "argument mapping," a graphical representation of the flow and structure of conflicting ideas, to the task of decision-support. Different views of the argument map allow users to modify the weights of various arguments. This design study also includes evaluation by users performing a walkthrough.