Editorial

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Christmas is nearing. So welcome to the Christmas 2012 issue of our Open Access eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government!

The Conference for eDemocracy and Open Government (CeDEM) began in 2011, developed out of the E-Democracy Conference series which we ran 2007-2010. JeDEM has accompanied both conference series with issues containing the "best of" these conferences. So this issue too presents keynotes' papers and those papers that received the highest peer-review scores in the 2011 and 2012 CeDEM conferences. And the CeDEM double-blind peer-review is no laughing matter: we have nearly reached a 50% rejection rate!

Looking back, the CeDEM11 looked at a range of topics, such as open government, open data, open access. It considered the tools and experiences associated with these issues, the impact they have both on society and the individual, as well as the implications they have for democracy, society, science and business. The CeDEM12 focused on the role of technologies have in empowering people, and at the issues related to being "open" such as transparency, access to data, changes to and in societal behavior, new ways of interacting, generating content and working together. Both CeDEMs also critically approach and discuss the changes we expect (changes we often expect to happen quickly, often at the drop of a hat) and we need to reflect upon the fact that that many ideas and projects fail to produce the results we envision.

Sinara Rao Karna and Divya Kirti Gupta clearly state that citizens need to regain confidence and faith in democratic processes. Citizens seek open, transparent, empathetic, and responsive governments. Some of the authors present cases which show governments and initiatives trying to to achieve just that. Francesco Molinari looks at the use and institutionalisation of two e-participatory tools, the DEMOS-Plan and the Electronic Town Meeting, within real public administration processes. Alina Ostling looks at parliamentary informatics, i.e. those online initiatives that monitor the performance of parliaments, as little is actually known about who uses these platforms and considers whether they are able to increase the quality of democracy. Timo Wandhöfer and his colleagues (Steve Taylor, Paul Walland, Ruxandra Geana, Robert Weichselbaum, Miriam Fernandez, Sergej Sizov) describe a government toolbox that is able to assist policy makers in the use of social networking sites as the primary communication channel, helps the policy makers find citizens' reactions to news stories, and also enables effective dialogue and engagement between governments and citizens.

If governments are to be open, responsive and communicated, then e-democratic processes need to consider the many stakeholders. Abinwi Nchise emphasises the role of human behavior in citizens' adoption of e-democracy, and uses the Theory of Planned Behaviour to study citizens' behaviours in e-participation. Jakob Svensson describes the Swedish elections in 2010, where

politicians and parties used social media platforms to a large extent. The results obtained by Jakob Svensson show that politicians use social media tools mainly to negotiate one's own image.

Openness is associated with other issues that have been heavily debated, such as real name policy, which obliges users to register on an online platform with their real name and is often connected with a request for personal data. Michelle Ruesch and Oliver Märker analysed real name policy in the context in e-participation consultation processes using the case of participatory budget in Gütersloh, Germany. They find that the negative consequences of real name policy outweigh the positive ones. Christian Geiger and Jörn von Lucke also critically explore issues related to the opening and free use of stored public sector data as supplied by state. They emphasise that simply putting the data online is not enough: we also need to consider whether, how and which data is to be supplied by the public sector.

Openness (in terms of access, government, data, etc.) is a topic which is here to stay and we need to find ways of using it effectively. Anneke Zuiderwijk, Keith Jeffery and Marijn Janssen argue that the effective use of open data and for open data to be valuable for the users requires metadata and the appropriate metadata architecture. This will lead to a number of benefits in the publication and use of open data, such as finding, accessibility, storing, preservation, analysing, comparing, reproducing, finding inconsistencies, correct interpretation, visualizing, linking data, assessing and ranking the quality of data and avoiding unnecessary duplication of data.

The invited papers represent extended papers by Axel Bruns and Caroline Haythornthwaite, keynotes at the CeDEM. Their keynotes and their papers look at the important issues that need to be considered for openness in e-government and e-democracy to be successfully implemented and used. Axel Bruns' paper focuses on the development, interaction and self-organisation of online citizen communities. By analyzing the use of social media during acute events (the floods in Australia and the case of Wikileaks), he suggests taking the lessons learned here and applying them to e-democracy initiatives. Such lessons may be ensuring low hurdles to participation, keeping things simple, and allowing access through more than just one point of entry. Caroline Haytnornthwaite looks at what supports participation in online networks, peer production and collective action. First, a distinction between online communities and online crowds must be made, as they represent two very different forms of online organization. Secondly there are a range of factors such as reputation, recognition, and reward systems that impact how people participate, control and contribute information and thus in turn impact e-participation, voting, information sharing and democratic processes.

We hope to continue the discussion about these topics with you in 2013 at the CeDEM13 held 22-25 May 2013 in Krems. We have already booked the keynotes, nice weather, good food and some nice wine!

A few more days and then it will be 2013. We take the opportunity to wish you Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, Happy Holidays! In the meantime, enjoy this issue and thank you all – for reading, writing, supporting and participating in the CeDEM conferences and the JeDEM journals.