



Editorial 18(1)

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The articles in this issue of the JeDEM collectively illustrate a central challenge facing contemporary digital government: technological innovation is advancing faster than the institutions, governance structures, and social practices needed to sustain it. Across diverse contexts including Switzerland, Latin America, Mexico, Malaysia, Turkey, and Sweden, the contributions demonstrate that successful digital transformation is not primarily a technological endeavor. Rather, it is a question of governance, organizational learning, citizen participation, trust, and institutional adaptation.

A prominent theme emerging from this issue is the growing integration of artificial intelligence and automation into public sector work. Pechtor's study of AI adoption in Swiss healthcare administration highlights the practical realities of moving AI solutions from experimentation to operational deployment. By validating the Adoption Framework for AI in the Public Sector (AFAIPS), the study demonstrates the importance of iterative development, stakeholder engagement, and organizational learning in navigating the uncertainties associated with AI implementation. The findings offer a valuable roadmap for public managers seeking to balance innovation with accountability while creating sustainable public value.

The governance challenges accompanying AI adoption are further explored by Bárcena Juárez and Cardona-Gómez in their examination of "shadow AI" among legislative advisors in Mexico City. Their research reveals a growing gap between technological adoption and formal regulation. Even in the absence of official governance frameworks, public servants develop informal norms and practical boundaries to manage emerging risks. While these self-imposed safeguards enable experimentation, the study also highlights their fragility, underscoring the need for formalized governance mechanisms, training, secure infrastructures, and institutional guidance. Together with Pechtor's contribution, this article reinforces the view that AI governance must evolve alongside technological deployment rather than follow it as an afterthought.

Automation beyond AI also receives attention through Güner, Han, and Juell-Skielse's comparative study of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) governance in Turkey and Sweden. Their findings challenge one-size-fits-all approaches to automation governance. Instead, the authors show how governance structures are shaped by organizational maturity, technological complexity, and admin-

istrative culture. Whether through centralized control or more decentralized innovation models supported by Centers of Excellence, effective governance emerges as context-dependent. Their work reminds us that digital transformation pathways vary significantly across administrative environments and that institutional diversity remains a crucial consideration in public sector innovation.

Alongside questions of technology governance, this issue also emphasizes the continued importance of citizenship, participation, and inclusion. Silva, Rodrigues, and Cunha examine how social movements and civil society organizations across Latin America use digital technologies to advance citizenship practices and claim rights. Their systematic review reveals that digital platforms can serve as tools for mobilization, participation, and social transformation, while also reshaping traditional understandings of citizenship. By conceptualizing citizenship as an evolving sociotechnical practice, the authors provide valuable insights into how digital technologies enable new forms of civic engagement and democratic action.

The relationship between digital transformation and citizen engagement is further explored by Liu and Khalid in their study of Malaysian e-participation. Their findings highlight a persistent reality of digital governance: access and capability remain foundational prerequisites for participation. Physical access to digital infrastructure and digital skills emerge as critical enablers, while concerns about privacy, security, and misinformation continue to discourage engagement. Notably, trust is shown to operate primarily as a direct contributor to participation rather than as a mechanism that mitigates perceived risks. The study reminds policymakers that expanding digital participation requires more than technological platforms alone; it demands sustained investments in digital inclusion, cybersecurity, and public trust.

Taken together, the contributions in this issue present a nuanced picture of digital government in transition. They demonstrate that innovation must be accompanied by governance arrangements capable of managing uncertainty, accountability, and organizational change. They also show that citizens remain at the center of digital transformation processes, whether as users of government platforms, participants in democratic processes, or actors who actively shape citizenship through digital technologies.

As governments worldwide continue to adopt AI, automation, and digital participation tools, the studies presented here offer timely lessons. Successful digital transformation depends not only on technological capability but also on adaptive governance, institutional learning, public trust, and meaningful citizen engagement. The challenge for researchers and practitioners alike is therefore not simply to govern technology, but to ensure that technological innovation contributes to more effective, inclusive, and democratic public institutions.

This issue of JeDEM contributes important empirical and conceptual insights toward that goal, advancing our understanding of how public organizations and societies can navigate the opportunities and complexities of digital transformation in an increasingly data-driven world.