Editorial

Journal for E-Democracy and Open Government 5(2): Best Papers from the CeDEM13 Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government 2013

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We are pleased to present you the issue of the JeDEM that accompanies and contains the best papers from the CeDEM13, the Conference for E-Democracy and Open Government held in Krems in May 2013. In this issue, as we read the papers, we travel the world: from Scotland (the use of IT and social media for online campaigning), Italy (the Beppe Grillo phenomenon), UK and Iceland (e-participation and democratic reform), Sweden (the use of ICTS in the safe online e-services), Greece (parliamentary information visualization), the USA (the Open Data campaign) and finally, to Singapore (collective action).

The first papers present research on social media and political activities in Europe. Graeme Baxter and Rita Marcella's research looks at the ways in which political parties and politicians in Scotland use the internet during parliamentary election campaigns. Their four studies focus on Scottish political actors' online efforts, the campaign information provided to the electorate and the opportunities for interaction, debate and feedback. The paper shows that new technologies are used in online election campaigning in Scotland and although there is an association between the candidates' use of social media and their electoral success, the authors challenge the statement made by a Scottish politician in 2011 that this was the first European election where social media impacted the election results. Rosanna De Rosa also analyses the use of social media in the political arena: Beppe Grillo, one of the first politicians in Italy to use social media for political purposes, even before Barack Obama's electoral victory in 2008. Beppe Grillo has been considered „European Hero of the Year" by Time Magazine in 2005, and, in 2008, The Guardian listed his blog at number 9 of the world's top 50 most powerful blogs. De Rosa describes the „phenomenon" Grillo, whose political success and method is both admired and feared, and reveals how difficult it is to fit him and the Movimento 5 Stelle into a set interpretative framework. At the same time her research reveals how this „phenomenon" does fit into the current political context. Julie Freeman and Sharna Quirke look at the use of ICTs for achieving political and democratic reform in the United Kingdom and in Iceland. Governments are increasingly using ICTs to engage citizens in democratic practices but this requires a change in government culture. They suggest that the use of ICT can help understand and support political representation, transparency, and participation, but that government focus is still on information dissemination, service delivery, and accountability. This focus provides only few opportunities for civic engagement, and they urge that political representatives relinquish some of their power, engage in open political practices and receptive and responsive communication with citizens. Their case studies highlight that the success of e-democracy and democratic engagement is linked to the way civic involvement is considered in broader political processes, and by combining off and online methods of political participation.

Next, some research on technology and public administrations. Mariana Gustafsson and Elin Wihlborg's work looks at online public services and administration (e-services) in Sweden. Their research is an analysis of safe log-ins in e-government services used by and in compulsory schools, and they consider the processes and factors that may impact trust in public e-services. They suggest that for e-services to be extensively used, then these must not only be as simple as possible, but they must also be safe: security is central to building trust and legitimacy. Thus, they also suggest that secure identification tools are essential for the increased use and for achieving greater legitimacy of public e-services. In Greece, Aspasia Papaloi and Dimitris Gouscous argue that there is a need to present and explain the legislative process to citizens, which in turn would encourage openness, transparency, accountability of legislators and also the empowerment of citizens. Clarity of information and transparency are very important for achieving such aims, but they are often difficult to achieve! They consider the implementation of information visualisation in parliamentary informatics, and how it can help achieve and support clarity and transparency in legislative processes, transfer of knowledge, communication, collaboration and empowerment.

From Europe we look West to some research in the USA. Alon Peled reviews the first version of the Open Data (OD) campaign launched in 2009. Peled clearly states that a transparency „policy bubble" must be avoided and suggests concrete ideas for re-designing OD 2.0, making it more focused and effective. Open Data needs good strategies, so that OD can help improve decision-making, services, and to avoid the misunderstanding that „open" equates „free". He argues that a good OD strategy must consider that whilst OD can certainly be an effective tool in some domains, in others, OD is unable to help, and can actually be harmful.

Turning East, to Singapore. Carol Soon considers how technology has been able to enrich but also complicate the process of collective action, and within this context, the threshold from non-participation to participation. Internet technologies play an important role in helping activist bloggers organize, distribute their work, circumvent real-world constraints and enable participants to overcome. She examines social movement theories (and shows how these are important for explaining and understanding why one participates in collective action), the institutional conditions in the activists' environment, and how technology helps overcome such conditions in Singapore (a country that has a paradox relationship between democratisation and technology adoption).

Enjoy reading this collection of the CeDEM13 best papers, and hope to see you at the next CeDEM in May 2014! We also take this opportunity to thank you all – for reading, writing, supporting and participating in the CeDEM conferences and the JeDEM journals.