



Editorial

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CeDEM14 broke all previous records in terms of number of people attending, number of papers submitted, number of workshops offered and the number of pages in the proceedings. Whilst we of course recommend reading the CeDEM Proceedings, the Journal of E-Democracy and Open Government allows us to showcase the best papers from the conference. These are the papers that received the highest peer-review marks and some were nominated for the CeDEM Best Paper Award.

The CeDEM Best Paper Award was presented for the first time at CeDEM14. The reviewers, programme committee members, track directors, and conference chairs were involved in the process of nominating and rating the papers, and deciding on the winners of the prize. We were pleased to present this award to Raimondo Iemma, Michele Osella and Federico Morando for their paper on Open Data. In this issue of JeDEM, you will find an updated and revised version of their paper, where the authors study the opportunities provided by the reuse of public data and tools, compare open data platforms, and present the features of an Open Data platform (Open-DAI) they developed. Open Government Data publishing allows the re-use of data by third parties, but achieving high-level policy objectives requires the use of standardised procedures. Their research shows that to maximise the value of open data requires means making data available and ensuring features that allow finding the data, the integration of data, and interaction with those who want to re-use the data. The comparison of open data platforms provides an interesting framework which is both useful and will be further developed.

All the papers in this issue were submitted to the CeDEM14, but then updated and revised for this issue of the journal. A further paper, by Maximilian Heimstädt, Frederic Saunderson and Tom Heath, also looks at Open Data, its development and how different organisations position themselves around it. The results of their research provide a good overview of Open Data's growth, meaning(s) and definition(s), the principle(s), influence(s), and the actors involved. Although Open Data initiatives are strong (particularly in the UK), much remains to be done, and they point out that Open Government Data needs to benefit democracy systems. But this is not an issue about Open Data (see JeDEM 6(1) for that), it also presents papers on liquid democracy, participation in online communities, information visualisation and e-voting.

Let us begin then by going back to the last century. In the 1920s, the pre-computer days, Otto Neurath proposed „Isotype“ as a method for pictorial statistics, the transformation of (complex) data into pictures. „Isotype“ is now known as „information visualisation“ and is a means of presenting abstract data as visual representations. In their paper, Eva Mayr and Günther Schreder present and evaluate Otto Neurath's Isotype method in terms of its relevance, application and possible impact on new media, civic education and participation. They show that special features of an „Isotype 2.0“ may be useful, as they are easily accessible to the broad public, do not require particular educational levels in order to be understood, and can easily be reflected on. The new Isotype method may be able to empower the public by providing relevant information and enable active participation in society and politics. Florian Windhager and Michael Smuc also look at how information visualisation, by using graphic representations, helps make sense of complex data in media, science, education, and politics. They present several information visualisation methods

that can be used for political information (e.g. physical and political maps, cartograms, bubble charts, network graph, dynamic visualisation methods, political infographics) and discuss them in terms of how they work and the insights they offer. Whilst much can be gained from information visualisation, limits are posed by the users' literacy, motivations, goals, technical skills, and emphasise the need to know user or audience. By focusing on online participation in terms of the subjective and emotional, Jakob Svensson looks at those aspects normally relevant to affinity and sexual identity but which may also help understand broader political participation. Online communities allow people to socialise regardless of geographic boundaries, and by studying political discussions in the community Qruiser (the Nordic LGBT -Lesbian, Gay, Bi-, Transsexual – online community), Jakob studied both non-normative identities and radical democratic perspectives. There he found the political discussions to be antagonistic and rude, and by using the ethnographic approach, describes what motivates participation in heated online discussions and what these motivations reveal about society and our co-existence in it.

Damain Mac Namara, Paul Gibson and Ken Oakley's work focuses on users by looking at the usability aspect of commercial electronic voting machines. They begin with a differentiation between electronic voting systems and „pen and paper“ based voting, then present a classification method they call „Just-Like-Paper“. Their work stems from the development of the DualVote system, a system that mirrors the paper-and-pen voting method used in Ireland, and they aim to increasingly add features. To achieve high usability, the authors analysed 26 voting machines in terms of interface features and functionality, and come to the conclusion that feedback (e.g. a confirmation) is important for the user. Although their classification system is a first attempt to categorise systems in terms of interface, functionality and usability, it can already be of value to e-voting system developers and acquirers, and provides a basis for further work in this area. Another paper that focuses on the users of internet voting is that by Micha Germann and Uwe Serdült, who focus on Switzerland. Switzerland boasts the highest number of online voting trials, conducted in 3 cantons and with Swiss expatriates. The authors' work addresses the profile of the users of internet voting, the impact on electoral turnout and mobilisation effects. Results reveal that the online channel is the preferred mode for voting by Swiss expatriates and that the digital divide still exists, as the users tend to be young, male and of higher social status. Given federal elections in 2015 and further trials in 2016, the authors provide an outlook on future developments.

Even by going back in time, it is not possible to decide who first came up with the concept of Liquid Democracy, but nevertheless it offers a method of collaborative decision-making. Within this context, Alois Paulin focuses on the development of a coherent technical system for advanced self-managed government. He argues that a Self-Service Government may enable a new model of government in which jural eligibilities (e.g. rights) are determined by Constellation-Based Reasoning (CBR), non-bureaucratic collaborative decision-making and modern parliamentary decision-making.

A range of papers, a range of topics - we hope you enjoy the papers in this issue of JeDEM!