The second part of the IJICTHD double issue on “ICT and citizen participation in local governance” explores the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) on citizen e-participation in rural areas, in remote forest regions, and in displaced aboriginal communities. As mentioned in the first part of this double issue, there are two main shifts that shape what has been termed as the reinvention of government. First, the move from traditional, hierarchical forms of public administration to network models of public sector organization, based on the cooperation and interdependence between public and private entities, and on new structures of citizen participation in public affairs, described as the move from government to governance. Second, the shift from a paper based public administration to one based largely on information and communication technologies, including more and more the use of web 2.0 tools. These changes create new challenges for citizen collaboration with government. For that reason, as referred in the first part of this double issue, new forms and tools for citizen’s e-participation in public policy design and decision-making in the digital age has been the focus of intense debates in recent years.

The articles included in this second issue are also intended to be a contribution for the ongoing debate on citizen e-participation in digital local governance. The specific aim is to address some of the key issues of that debate: the adoption and use of information and communication technologies by rural youths; the use of information and communication technologies in forest landscape governance; and the use of digital media to overcome disconnection in displaced aboriginal communities.

These articles, written by researchers from different academic backgrounds, working in Asia, Europe and North America, offer a theoretically informed perspective of the role that ICT can play in governance processes and examine the consequences from the point of view of human development.

The first article - “Adoption and use of ICTs among rural youth: evidence from Greece”, by George Alexopoulos, Alex Koutsouris, and Irene Tzouramani offers a critical perspective of the potential benefits that result from the dissemination of information and communication technologies by rural youths; the use of information and communication technologies in forest landscape governance; and the use of digital media to overcome disconnection in displaced aboriginal communities.
technologies among young rural inhabitants, especially farmers, in Greece. The article discusses the findings of a quantitative research, based on a large scale survey in Greece, whose results point towards an emerging intra-rural digital divide.

In “Pathways to participatory landscape governance in Northern Laos: the role of Information and Communication Technologies”, John Daniel Watts, Vilaphong Kanyasone, and Vongvilay Vongkhamsoa examine the governance of landscapes through participatory action research methods and describe how the lack of access to information and communication technologies have inhibited the participation of local actors in landscape governance as well as how it affected their abilities to effectively and adaptively manage these landscapes. The article argues that community radio, if it provides local actors with the relevant information, can potentially improve the participation of local residents in the governance of multifunctional landscapes in sites adjacent to protected areas, as the authors conclude in this case-study in Laos.

Jon Corbett and Raquel Mann discuss in article 3 - “Tlowitsis re-imagined: the use of digital media to build nation and to overcome disconnection in a displaced aboriginal community” - the use of information and communication technologies, in particular participatory video, in nation building, according to certain criteria defined by the authors. Corbett and Mann discuss the factors that affect citizen participation and exclusion in the case of Tlowitsis, a dispersed indigenous community in British Columbia, Canada, arguing that these new media technologies have the potential to overcome geographic barriers associated with the dispersal of these populations.

In sum, these articles show why and how information and communication technologies can impact on citizen participation in local governance processes, in different contexts, from developed countries to forest areas in remote regions of developing countries. Nonetheless, like the articles in the first part of this double issue, they also support the (hypo)thesis that there are social, economic and technological barriers, among other factors, that limit the potential for change in governance processes. Full digital citizenship requires technological access and skills as well as educational competencies, and other economic and social conditions. Besides technology inequalities, poverty and illiteracy are examples of factors that keep citizens away from full e-participation in local governance.

The authors of these articles have done an important input for the development of our understanding of youth e-participation in rural areas, e-participation in landscape management in remote forest regions, and in nation building processes within dispersed aboriginal communities. The articles will be of interest to students, scholars and practitioners in the field of governance studies and for all those concerned with citizen e-participation.

To work with this group of colleagues was a gratifying experience and I thank them for their contributions as well as for their cooperation during the peer-review process. I am also in debt to the colleagues that accepted my invitation to review manuscripts for the double issue on “ICT and citizen participation in local governance”, the first of which, focused on “e-Participation of Children and Citizens with Disabilities”, was already published as Vol. 2(2), and whose list of names and affiliations is published in the following page.

Carlos Nunes Silva
Guest Editor
IJICTHD
Reviewers of manuscripts submitted for the IJICTHD’ double issue on “ICT and citizen participation in local governance”

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