

GUEST EDITORIAL PREFACE

Special Issue on “Digital Public Sector Evolution: Big Data, Smart Cities, and Open Innovation”

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This special issue of the *International Journal of Electronic Government Research* (IJEGR) consist of papers presented at the annual international workshop on “Digital Public Sector Evolution: Big Data, Smart Cities, and Open Innovation”. The workshop was held on 15 December 2013 in Milan, in conjunction with the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS 2013), and it is part of the activities of the Special Interest Group for eGovernment (SIGeGov) of the Association for Information Systems (AIS). The mission of the AIS Special Interest Group for eGovernment (SIGeGov) is to promote quality and relevance in eGovernment research and to highlight the relevance of research on Information Systems in the public sector within the AIS community. The SIG focuses on the challenges of public sector IS policy, implementation, and management, and aims at providing a shared forum for

Information Systems researchers, students, and practitioners interested in this field of study.

To promote these goals, the SIGeGov aims at bringing together the communities of public sector IT researchers in the IS field and of practitioners to tackle emerging trends in the field of eGovernment. The annual pre-ICIS workshop has now been successfully run for a number of years (Phoenix, AZ 2009; St. Louis, MO 2010; Shanghai 2011; Orlando, FL 2012; Milan 2013), and can be considered a well-established forum for public sector IT researchers within the IS field. As of 2013, the SIGeGov has 70+ members from 29 countries around the world.

The new SIGeGov board, elected in 2013, is aiming at building on this momentum to further increase the visibility and scope of the SIG’s activities, strengthening and extending the network of associates with a new web platform (<http://aisnet.org/members/group>).

aspx?id=89758), and stimulating practitioner involvement in the network, e.g. by organizing a new workshop event on “Rethinking Information Systems in the Public Sector: Bridging Academia and Public service”, to be held for the first time in conjunction with the European Conference on Information Systems (ECIS), in June 2014.

The workshop in which the papers presented here were discussed focused on the theme of “Digital Public Sector Evolution: Big Data, Smart Cities, and Open Innovation”. As increasing demands are put on actors involved in eGovernment policies and services (governmental agencies, companies, and NGOs), the digital public sector is faced with challenges related to making sense of increasing amounts of data, to governing complex metropolitan systems, and to opening up its information infrastructure to citizens. These developments in the public sector provide a number of key challenges that are to be addressed by the eGovernment researcher community, in terms of understanding influencing factors, assessing impacts, and drawing normative options and theoretical frameworks.

The theme of Big Data has quickly become pervasive in a wide range of public discourses, including the ones of government digital service provision, policy-making, and citizen engagement. This pervasiveness, however, risks to turn the concept into yet another buzzword that hinders, rather than helps, making sense of a real phenomenon with yet partially uncovered potential.

Directly linked to the issue of the massively increasing availability of data and data processing resources is the key question of openness. The challenges regarding the opening of datasets faced by public policy-makers vis-à-vis a wide range of stakeholders are manifold. On the one hand, there is an urging need to understand the implications of providing public access to data that so far has been confined within the public sector walls. We need to tackle the challenges of opening up government and to better understand implications of the multi-faceted concept of transparency on governance. On the other

hand, there is a clear link between openness and potential of innovation that needs to be unboxed. The thematic area of Open Innovation is therefore mainly concerned with identifying, investigating, and assessing the diverse perspectives on this concept.

In terms of concrete policy implementations, the strongest embodiment of these conceptual challenges can be found in the booming of Smart City initiatives. Within this phenomenon, we are witnessing a convergence of foci from diverse areas, such as e.g. digital urban planning, social media management, energy and transportation policies. These emerging phenomena, and the attempt to link them within shared policy frameworks, not only pose a huge number of research challenges, but also have the potential to redefine the very scope of what is traditionally considered the eGovernment area.

The five papers selected for this Special Issue are a sample of the ongoing research in the three thematic areas of Smart Cities, Big Data, and Open Innovation in eGovernment. All papers accepted for the workshop have been blind-reviewed by at least two reviewers, and the ones selected for this Special Issue have been subject to an additional screening and revision.

The article “*E-Government innovations and work transformations: Implications of the introduction of electronic tools in public government organizations*”, by Esther Ruiz Ben and Tino Schuppan, investigates emerging attitudes of public government employees towards new forms of work with electronic tools, looking at the case of Electronic Record Systems (ERS) introduction in Germany. Ben and Schuppan aim at improving the understanding of the phases of innovation, and identify what particular problems are related to the resistance or support of the innovation.

The article “*Is Open Data enough? e-Governance challenges for Open Government?*” by Gianluca Misuraca and Gianluigi Viscusi aims at critically unboxing the initiatives of Open Government at national level. Focusing on the cases of France and the UK, Misuraca and Viscusi provide an interpretive framework that highlights the importance of the relationship

between different governance national traditions and the values of performance, openness, and inclusion, on the different ways Open Government initiatives are shaped.

Similarly, the article “*Wrestling with contradictions in government social media practices*”, by Lars Haahr, takes a critical perspective by looking at the embedded paradoxes in government’s practices with social media. Focusing on social media practices at municipal level, Haahr uncovers three sets of contradictions in social media adoption by local governments: the one between local engagement and central control; the one between service administration and community feeling; and the one between proprietary municipal websites and public social media platforms.

The article “*Digital Reverberations of City Spaces & Public Places*”, by Christopher Zimmerman, Kjeld Hansen, and Ravi Vatrapu, takes departure from the proliferation of location-specific data produced by mobile technology and social media, and on their impacts on the city landscape. The authors explore the combinations of evolving technological relationships between mobile, social, and local technologies, and propose a theoretical model that explains the supply and demand of relevant information between the people and places in the online and

offline worlds. These considerations introduce a responsibility to city governments, urban planners and policy makers involved in the development of smart cities.

Lastly, the article “*Smart Cities as State Owned Enterprises with International Impact: Rhetoric or Reality?*”, by Leonidas G. Anthopoulos and Panos Fitsilis, take a critical stance on Smart City initiatives, by questioning their ownership and their strategic evolution. Drawing on the analysis of 34 smart city projects across the world and of their business models, they conclude that the majority of those can in fact be considered as State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), due to their particular partnership, mission and public funding.

Presenting this Special Issue of IJEGR comes with the hope that these contributions will be included in a wider critical discussion on the ongoing evolution of the digital public sector, for which the *International Journal of E-Government Research* and the *AIS Special Interest Group on eGovernment (SIGeGov)* can provide a shared forum.

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