
Guest editors' introduction: e-participation systems and services in converging regions

Yannis Charalabidis

Decision Support Systems Laboratory,
National Technical University of Athens,
Iroon Polytechniou 9, 15773 Zografou, Greece
E-mail: yannisx@epu.ntua.gr

Maria Wimmer

Institute for Information Systems Research,
University of Koblenz-Landau,
Universitaetsstr. 1, 56070 Koblenz, Germany
E-mail: wimmer@uni-koblenz.de

Gianluca Misuraca

College of Management of Technology,
Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne,
CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland
E-mail: gianluca.misuraca@epfl.ch

Electronic participation systems are being developed and are operational in various countries, at national or local levels, with various levels of adoption. The recent generations of such systems seem to have solved initial and core philosophy problems, so current research is focused in advanced operational characteristics. However, thinking of the future unified international environment, one can easily figure that the field of widespread e-participating platforms, especially in converging and outmost regions, still poses crucial difficulties regarding the fundamental philosophy and principles of these systems. The most prevalent of these issues are multilinguality, cultural diversity, minority rights, digital division and conflict resolution needs. Inspired by such problems, current research and practice investigates new ways to reach the public and push more and more processes through the electronic democratisation channels.

This special issue focuses on recent approaches in e-participation systems and aims to report relevant research and experiences from operational case studies, with an emphasis to applications and real-life examples from regions and countries that are still converging towards the more progressed ones. Contributions touched upon the following issues:

- electronic participation systems at local, national, regional or international level
- approaches enhancing participation of minorities in the decision process
- legislation-oriented e-participation systems, especially involving NGO's and representative bodies
- argument visualisation and semantic annotation in content and context-rich e-participation systems
- e-participation systems in multilingual and culturally diverse environments
- new channels of interaction for e-participation systems, including mobile devices or interactive television
- applications of e-participation systems in areas of digital divide or e-inclusion threats
- applications of electronic democracy in countries or regions with diverse e-capacities
- legal and ethical issues affecting the adoption of e-participation systems
- novel standardisation approaches in e-participation
- impact assessment models and reusable case reports on e-participation.

The finally approved five papers that are published in this Special Issue are briefly presented as follows:

- In 'Assessment of the outcomes of e-government for good governance: a case of the Land Management Information System in Mozambique', Macueve discusses the participative characteristics that information processes should have, in light of a recent implementation in the South-Eastern Africa region.
- 'Engaging youth through deliberative e-participation: a case study', by Edelmann, Krimmer and Parycek, touches on the subject of participation of the youth, through describing a specifically designed e-participation pilot in the Austrian Parliament.
- Peart and Ramos Diaz in 'Taking stock: local e-democracy in Europe and the USA', perform a thorough analysis of local e-participation projects and initiatives in 60 countries, giving important practices and lessons learnt in emerging markets and converging regions all over the world.
- In 'Challenges and barriers in implementing e-participation tools. One year of experience from implementing Gov2Demoss in 64 municipalities in Spain', Karamagioli and Koulolias propose a new architecture for municipal e-participation systems, piloted in a European converging region, including more than 60 municipalities in Southern Spain.
- Finally, Špaček in 'E-participation and its practice in Czech regional government' discusses the status, offered services and outlook of e-participation Portals in Czech municipalities and prefectures.

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