# Editorial

## Dimitris Gouscos

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies,
University of Athens,
5, Stadiou Str. (7th floor),
GR-10562 Athens, Greece
E-mail: gouscos@media.uoa.gr

**Biographical notes:** Dimitris Gouscos is an Assistant Professor with the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies of the University of Athens and a Research Fellow of the Laboratory of New Technologies in Communication, Education and the Mass Media. His research interests include digital communication, electronic governance, social media and digital games.

The third issue of Volume 6 of *International Journal of Electronic Governance* presents a collection of research papers covering an interesting spectrum of subjects that extend from the traditional agenda of electronic government to multiple facets of the role that information and communication technologies of today can play with respect to democracy, public management, public information as well as public opinion.

In the opening paper of the issue, *Carrots and sticks: internet governance in non-democratic regimes*, Karlsson discusses how the use of ICTs by non-democratic regimes remains a widely debated issue. What is more, an issue that has gained further importance, as global e-participation rankings have indicated an expansive growth of e-participation development in non-democratic countries in recent years. The author puts forward the argument that developments in online participation do not necessarily imply corresponding advancements in democratisation. Drawing on empirical data on e-participation as well as on filtering, surveillance and internet censorship, findings are brought forward indicating that non-democratic states characterised by high levels of e-participation generally combine these uses of ICTs with reactive strategies for controlling citizens' internet use.

The relationships between internet use and political efficacy are also discussed in the following research paper by Demertzis, Milioni and Gialamas, concerning the case of the Republic of Cyprus. As the authors note in *Internet use and political efficacy: the case of Cyprus*, although political efficacy is considered to be an important indicator of a well-functioning democracy, it is so far unclear whether it is being enhanced or undermined by internet use. Seeking to shed light on this complex relationship, the authors take the particular case of the Republic of Cyprus and explore the effect of internet use, via the concept of Digital Updatedness, on users' perceptions about the impact of the internet on political efficacy and the role of sociocultural factors therein. Although the effect of internet use on internet-mediated political efficacy is found to be weak, the role of the sociocultural environment appears to be particularly important.

Research findings are discussed and contextualised in terms of the distinct characteristics of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot political culture.

The ways that internet may or may not bring forward a democratising potential, in the broader sense of this term, also come up as an overarching theme of the paper by Kostakis and Giotitsas. In *Public information as a Commons: the case of ERT and the peer-to-peer prospect*, the authors discuss a new understanding of the public character of information, based on the alternative modes of property that came to foreground with the advent of Commons-based peer production and the information Commons. The case of the digital archive of ERT, the public broadcaster of Greece, is used to highlight the tension between traditional understanding of state/public property and new realisation inaugurated by Commons-based peer production, and support the argument that adoption of policies conforming to this new mode of production is imperative for the use, sharing and protection of public information.

The two research papers concluding the current issue of IJEG report on research that attempts to bring forward more positive results on the benefits that ICTs can bring about for public opinion and public governance. In *A tool for the visualisation of public opinion*, Soulis, Varlamis, Giannakoulopoulos and Charatsev depart from the changes that the web and social media have brought forward in the way voters get informed, communicate and form their opinions. Given that the amount of textual information collected through public surveys and contributed by the voters themselves tends to become non-manageable through traditional techniques, the authors turn to information visualisation tools. In this context, an IV tool to handle survey results is presented, which allows users to select from a variety of graphs, drill down/roll-up to selected periods and inspect data gathered from both closed- and open-ended questions, using opinion mining techniques for quantification. This tool integrates open-source text-mining techniques and chart visualisations, and some demonstration results are provided in English and Greek opinion data sets.

Last but not least, the work of Abu-Shanab, Harb and Al-Zoubi turns to e-government to investigate its potential as an anti-corruption tool within the broader agenda of public management. In *E-government as an anti-corruption tool: citizens perceptions*, the authors present the results of a study that has tried to assess the literature and better understand how e-government can fight administrative corruption. In the context of this work, an Arabic language instrument has been deployed in Jordan for measuring main dimensions of corruption and their relation to e-government according to citizens' perceptions. On the basis of survey results, the authors emphasise that multiple facets of corruption are important to investigate and provide directions for future work on this subject.

Volume 6 of *International Journal of Electronic Governance* will be completed with a forthcoming special issue on 'Online Political Participation and Its Critics', guest-edited by Dr. Simon Gadras, University Lumière-Lyon 2, and Dr. Fabienne Greffet, University of Lorraine, France, whereas IJEG Volume 7 in 2014 will host a number of alternating regular and special issues from the cross-disciplinary agenda of electronic governance research and practice.

We invite all our readers to peruse for their information and interest the research papers, news and briefs and conference calendar of this issue of IJEG, and stay close to us for more updates and developments.