Guest Editorial

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Biographical notes: Yuri Misnikov is a part-time Research Fellow at the e-Governance Center of the ITMO University in St. Petersburg, Russia. He obtained his PhD in New Media and Communications at the University of Leeds, UK. His special research interest lies in the social impacts of digital ICTs, particularly on citizen engagement, public communication, internet discourses. In 2002–2007, he served as ICT/e-Governance Regional Policy Advisor for Europe and the CIS region at the UNDP Regional Centre in Bratislava (Slovakia). Among other successful regional projects, he developed and managed the establishment of the e-Governance Academy in Estonia as a prominent regional knowledge transfer hub.

Christine Leitner is a Senior Advisor and co-Founder of the Centre for Economics and Public Administration (CEPA) in London, UK. Previously before that she headed the Center for European Public Administration at Danube University, Austria. She was Senior Lecturer at the European Institute of Public Administration in Maastricht. From 2002 to 2010, she was Director of the European e-Government Awards. Other functions include: Member of the European Commission's Expert Group on Public Sector Innovation; Jury Member of the Bloomberg Mayors Challenge for Europe and the HM Sultan Qaboos Awards, Oman; Board Member of the e-Governance Academy, Estonia. She is editor and author of several publications on e-government.

Dmitrii Trutnev is Deputy Director of e-Governance Center of St. Petersburg National Research University of Information Technology Mechanics and Optics (ITMO University) since 2009. His academic career began in 1984 as a Researcher at the Department of Computer Engineering of the State Maritime Academy and continued in 1991–2009 in International Management Institute of St. Petersburg as Head of the ISM Department. In addition to a wealth of practical experience gained in the management of more than 30 international and regional projects in the sphere of e-Governance Development, his qualification is confirmed by certificates from CISA, PMP and PRINCE2® Agile Practitioner.

1   Background

Five out of six papers included in this volume originated from the contributions presented at the *1st International Conference Electronic Governance and Open Society: Challenges in Eurasia (EGOSE2016)* initiated and organised by the e-Governance Centre of the ITMO University in St. Petersburg, Russia, during 18–20 November, 2014. The conference, which saw its 3rd edition on 22–23 November 2016, was designed to focus on the current and emerging challenges in the vast Eurasian region in the field of e-governance solutions that promote ICT-enabled public sector innovations for both greater openness and administrative efficiency. Another important objective was to seek other regions' experiences to compare approaches, solutions, practices. These contributions that were afterwards substantially revised and expanded after a rigorous peer-review process constitute the present volume. In addition, one more paper was additionally accepted for publication following the announced Call for Papers and the subsequent review.

2   Description

Responding to the challenge of governance openness in the digital era, three papers address this topic directly by examining the notion of open government (OG) from the two distinctive but intertwined perspectives of civic engagement, on the one hand, and policy implementation, on the other hand. The former point of view is presented by *Smorgunov* of the St. Petersburg State University in 'Russian movement for 'open government': issues of civic engagement in politics'. He argues that digital technologies have not only changed the very ideology of public administrations but also forced them to operate in a principally different environment of the networked society that makes public governance "a function of social coordination" to encompass, in addition to the traditional cadre of professional managers, civil society members as new governance actors. He illustrates this argument with a public value concept by investigating the impact of these new participants on public politics – previously government-led – who bring in moral and ethical criteria to complement the conventual governance approach based on the "pragmatic criteria of efficiency".

The open government viewed through the perspective of policy implementation is addressed by two contributions: 'Expert assessment of open government in Russia: methodology, results and implementation impeding factors' authored by *Styrin and*

Dmitrieva (National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia) and 'Open government ideologies in post-soviet countries' by *Hansson et al.* from the Stockholm University, Sweden. Having the theme of OG policies as a common denominator, the first paper is more concerned with the evaluation of actual progress of policy implementation in Russia, whereas the second one takes on the post-soviet region by examining and comparing open government policy coherence in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine viewed through the lens of "ideas about open government, expressed in public statues and plans". Just as the paper described earlier, these two papers offer the conceptual introduction of OG by placing the primary emphasis on such democratic values as transparency, participation, accountability, deliberation and by building respective analytical and theoretical frameworks to reveal such values. The paper from Sweden insists on including innovation and collaboration as an integral part of OG policy criteria. The authors evaluating the Russian experience of adopting the official Openness Standard rely on the broader international knowledge presented in the OECD Open Government Analytical Framework in their effort to design an "expert monitoring and evaluation methodology". Elaborating and using distinct evaluation methods unites these two contributions as far as the exploration of OG policies is concerned.

Methodologically, the contribution entitled 'Program overview of e-government development within the Eurasian economic union: progress, challenges and prospects' authored by *Vidiasova et al.* of the ITMO University, St. Petersburg (Russia) also employs the progress assessment and comparison approach applied in the post-soviet context. However, it is done within a broader spectrum of e-governance issues to find out whether the "cross-boundary regional collaboration and economic integration and trade" between these countries has played any role in e-government progress and whether such intra-regional cooperation could be considered an important factor in future. The review of other regional entities and inter-country comparisons serve an essential part of the research methodology and design described in this paper.

The role of the method is also paramount for two other papers that focus on the use of social media to expand the meaning of transparency further in terms of stronger citizen participation. The paper 'Community characteristics of Twitter followers in EU-countries governmental accounts' written by Greek researchers from the University of Macedonia *Antoniadis and Zafiropoulos* together with *Vrana* of the Technological Education Institute of Central Macedonia set the goal to find out whether the use of Twitter accounts by 56 ministries of 17 EU countries would lead to the formation of communities of followers in order to "meet a desirable property of e-government adoption, consultation and discussion", especially the latter. The authors claim that compared to other social media, Twitter (viewed by the paper as a distinctive e-government service) possesses a range of effective communication tools enabling "following, mentioning, replying and retweeting" that potentially can promote the emergence of vibrant debating communities among followers. For that, the authors extensively draw on the existing literature about networked media as a "small-world phenomenon" in applying their mention/reply research method to analyse the websites of the sampled ministries. In contrast, the paper 'E-inclusion and perception of time among elderly: Russian regional perspective', authored by *Sergeyeva and Makarova* of the Saint Petersburg State University, investigates the use of social media by private citizens. They are interested to learn how the elderly use social networks in their effort to reconstruct the past by making the time an "object of sociological investigation".

Understanding time as "a self-evident maintenance of our life", the authors draw on the phenomenological sociology to argue that today new media technologies influence the "social analysis of time" because of the disappearance of the spatial and temporal constraints thanks to the digital mode of communication". The paper presents the outcome of in-depth, structured and semi-structured interviews with dozens of senior citizens who use social media to discover three main themes that manifest the perception of time for them.