Introduction to the Open and Participatory Government Minitrack

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Open government is an approach that purposefully emphasizes and re-invigorates the basic principle of a "government of the people, for the people, and by the people." Through information technology, committed administrative leadership, international initiatives such as the Open Government Partnership, and policies, countries around the world have now entered an era of unprecedented transparency of government operations and decision making intended to lead to more responsibility, accountability, collaborative and participatory government, and integrity of public officials. Additionally, involvement of citizens in the iterative design and evaluation of e-Government systems has led to more effective digital tools for civic engagement and participation in the long run.

As e-Government becomes more ubiquitous, many questions arise about what it means to develop and maintain an open and transparent government, engage in participatory government, encourage governance through transparency initiatives, support co-design of open and collaborative government, allow data ("Big Data") release and use for policy making and decision making, develop open data and open-data applications, and study how governments/governmental institutions might be influenced through openness and transparency efforts.

This year the Open and Participatory Government minitrack includes six papers that explore several issues related to participation and also to transparency and openness. As always, there is significant international representation. The papers include case studies of participation in budgeting and in redistricting; model building and testing in the contexts of crowd-sourced solutions and social capital building; and transparency in the contexts of university policies and document archives:

"Public Participation GIS: The Case of Redistricting," by Micah Altman and Michael McDonald, reviews technological advances that have enabled greater participation and transparency in the United States redistricting process. The authors pay particular attention to open-source redistricting software.

"Participatory Budgeting: A Framework to Analyze the Value-add of Citizen Participation," by Catherine Mkude, Cristina Perez-Espes, and Maria Wimmer, uses case studies to explore three models of participatory online budgeting: offline, online, and hybrid.

"Active Citizen E-Participation in Local Governance: Do Individual Social Capital and E-Participation Management Matter?," by Jooho Lee and Soonhee Kim, develops a model of active e-participation from an extensive literature review of social capital and citizen participation. Several hypotheses from the model are then tested from survey data, revealing the influence on e-participation on factors such as trust in government, volunteer experiences, offline social ties, and perceived responsiveness.

"The Challenges of Challenge.gov: Adopting Private Sector Business Innovations in the Federal Government," by Claudia Louis, Ines Mergel, Stuart Bretschneider, and Jason Smith, takes a critical look at the "Open Innovation" (OI) contests sponsored by the US government. Their examination of the challenge.gov website that supports these contests reveals several different uses of the site and questions whether complex technological solutions really arise from crowdsourcing efforts within government. On the other hand, they also observe that such programs are valuable for collecting insights from the public at all phases of the policy-making cycle.

"The Impact of the Transparency Policy on University Students' Trust and Intention of Continued Use," by Cayetano Medina Molina and Ramón Rufín Moreno, examines the impact of a university's transparency policy on student trust and intention to use the services of the program.

"A Proposed Standard Procedure to Define Minimum Scanning Attribute Levels for Hardcopy Documents," by Mitchell Cochran, examines what it means to make a true archival copy of a government document. The author proposes standards for various document types and concludes with guidelines for implementing a document imaging process within government agencies.

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