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Electronic Participation

Third IFIP WG 8.5 International Conference, ePart 2011
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Proceedings

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Preface

The International Conference on eParticipation fosters an integrated interdisciplinary research culture by providing a meeting place where eParticipation researchers can disseminate methods, tools and data and plan future cooperation. Organized annually, ePart is supported by IFIP WG 8.5 (International Federation for Information Processing Working Group 8.5 on Information Systems in Public Administration), and is the scientific hub for research and practice in the field of eParticipation. This year again, ePart brought together researchers from a wide range of academic disciplines working at the interface of technology and society. At the heart of ePart philosophy lies the idea that understanding the phenomenon of eParticipation requires contributions from different disciplines, even though these disciplines may offer divergent or even conflicting perspectives on eParticipation. The collaboration between researchers from these different disciplines gives us an insight into the complex world of participation. We can learn from the social sciences that eParticipation has many positive effects which we also find in normal participation processes. It can result in more active citizens, better policies and closer ties between society and governments. As the research papers in this conference series have demonstrated, eParticipation can result in positive outcomes but can also result in public frustration (much participation, limited impact) or in a greater influence of subjective knowledge over objective knowledge — experts and laymen are often equals on the Internet. The engineering disciplines provide us with the technology for eParticipation (such as argument visualization tools), but the potential field of application is much wider than merely enabling participation. Technology can also lead to a game change. eCampaigning, for example, has changed the course of many political campaigns. Technology re-structures the way people communicate and even reflect and learn. What makes this even more challenging is the fact that the impacts of technology often belong to the category of the unknown unknowns. Who could have predicted the Twitter revolutions a few years ago? In fact, in this publication, we see a number of research studies into the impact of social media, and in particular Twitter, on citizen participation in political decision making. At the same time the field is gradually maturing. Indeed, this publication presents papers enabling both a better theoretical understanding of eParticipation and also learning from initiatives and country studies.

We have brought all these exciting developments together in this year's ePart 2011 proceedings. The volume comprises six parts:

- Appreciation of Social Media
- Visualizing Arguments
- Understanding eParticipation
- eParticipation Initiatives and Country Studies

- Participation and eServices
- Innovative Technologies

This volume brings together 26 papers representing the comprehensive research of over 60 authors from countries worldwide. This is an amazing achievement for such a young conference which saw 19 full research papers published by Springer in 2010 and 16 papers in 2009.

All ePart papers were blind peer reviewed by at least three reviewers from the ePart 2011 Program Committee with the assistance of additional reviewers. We would like to acknowledge their professionalism and rigor, which resulted in this series of high-quality papers. ePart 2011 was hosted by the Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management (TPM) of Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands. The faculty has five research programmes which are at the interface of engineering and public administration. Earlier this year, these programmes were reviewed by an International Review Committee under the Dutch system of quality assurance and received very high scores. The faculty also offers several degree programmes aimed at students who are interested in connecting the worlds of engineering and policy making. Given its international orientation, the faculty is a natural environment for eParticipation research.

As in past years, Trauner Druck, Linz/Austria, published accepted work-in-progress papers and workshop and panel abstracts in a complementary proceedings volume. This year, that volume covers approx. 50 paper contributions, workshop abstracts, and panel summaries from both the IFIP EGOV and IFIP ePart conferences. Edited by the Chairs of both conferences, the volume once again illustrates the close links ePart has with EGOV, our sister conference focusing on eGovernment research.

Finally, we would like to thank Marijn Janssen and his team at TPM for organizing the conference, including all the crucial details pertaining to an international conference.

August/September 2011

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