

Relevance for the Danube Region

This section details the relevance for the Danube Region for those contributions that do not immediately relate to the Region. The following texts were provided by Alexander Prosser.

The Role of Social Media in the Arab Spring Uprisings

Araz Ramazan Ahmad

The paper analyses the role of social media in creating citizen networks and disseminating information in disruptive social contexts. It also analyses situations, where people get most of their information not via traditional, but social media (eg., “88% of Egyptians gain their news from social media tools”). The relevance to recent developments are readily visible: The paper itself draws parallels between the events in Moldova 2009, where Social Media and simple text messages were used to organise protests. Also more recent events in the Ukraine show clear parallels to some of the findings in the paper.

Quoting Habermas in that “the printing press helped democratise Europe by providing space for discussion and agreement among politically engaged citizens”, the paper draws the parallel to social media in this context, who fulfil a similarly revolutionary role as the printing press in the early days of the Modern Age. The conclusion that “[l]eadership in the information age will have to use the available tools to communicate meaning” has been shown to be valid also in parts of the Danube Region, where politically disruptive events took place.

E-Democracy and E-Tools of citizen participation on local level in Poland

Magdalena Musiał-Karg

The central finding of this empirical study is that respondents are interested in digital citizen participation both on the local and state level. The “top scorers” are participatory budgeting and eConsultations (eg., on legal initiatives). Important results concern differences between the acceptance of new participation and voting channels in metropolitan and rural areas, whereby the latter are a lot more reluctant.

This clearly observable differential and the preferences by the respondents reported in the contribution corroborates a very similar result found by the author of this summary in a comparable, yet completely unrelated study in Austria.¹ It can therefore be assumed that the results reported by Musiał-Karg are generally applicable throughout the Danube Region. It is also interesting to see, how such preferences stay rather constant over time and across countries.

¹ PROSSER, A., LENHART, J., GUO, Y., 2005. Der Wunsch nach e-Demokratie: demographische Merkmale und Motive. In Effizienz von e-Lösungen in Staat und Gesellschaft, Hrsg. Schweighofer, E., Liebwald, D., Augeneder, S., Menzel, T., 248-255. Stuttgart: Boorberg.

The Role of ICT in Poverty Alleviation in India

Sanjay Chopra

This contribution addresses two main research questions: (i) What is the role of ICT in economic empowerment of the poor including employment and income generation? (ii) What is the role of ICT in combating social exclusion especially for women?

The second question – unfortunately – is still relevant also in the E.U. and hence also in the Danube Region. The gender pay gap may have already decreased substantially in the E.U., however, it is still 16% on average², whereby in the Danube Region Germany and the Czech Republic are at the tail end of the list at over 20% and 18% pay gap, resp. (Austria did not report any figures). Interestingly, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria and Slovenia are below 10, with Romania topping the list with a gender pay gap of 1%. These gaps reported by the E.U. strongly and positively correlate with the overall employment rate of women, i.e., the higher the employment rate for women the higher the pay gap.

This is exactly the point, where this contribution addresses research question (ii). Chopra shows how ICT can provide opportunity for women to not only get employment, but improve their employability and to find better paid work simply by increasing their “radius” of employment opportunities. It is interesting to see that the E.U. report draws conclusions very similar to Chopra, when identifying qualification issues and limited suitable job opportunities as some of the main topics explaining the pay gap (eg, by forcing women into “atypical” employment).

In this context, it would be interesting to analyse the considerable differences in the pay gap between most of the former West European and the former East European countries utilizing the ideas and influencing ICT-based factors advanced by Chopra in this regard.

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/report-gender-pay-gap-eu-countries_october2018_en_0.pdf

Citizen Participation as a Tool for Creating an Effective E-Governance System in Iraq

Paiman Ahmad

The contribution reports on an empirical study on the acceptance of eGovernance. The empirical results show that (i) trust is the key issue if it comes to acceptance of such solutions, which can also be observed in the Danube Region (cf. the contributions of Tomičić Furjan et al, Zaiğ and Paulin in last year's volume); (ii) respondents expect better public service delivery and increased transparency by eGovernance (again, cf. the above-quoted papers from last year's volume) and (iii) the necessary leadership must be provided to successfully implement such solutions. Given past empirical results from the Danube Region the similarity in these empirical results is rather interesting.

DEATH OF “OPEN DATA”? HOW OPEN DATA HAS BEEN REALISING AND/OR NOT REALISING OPEN GOVERNMENT

Hiroko Kudo

Administrative reform with increased transparency and improved public service delivery is high on the agenda in the Danube Region. This paper discusses the impact of open data initiatives on such reform. On the one hand, the empirical research presented in the paper shows that “naïve” application of open data concepts does not in itself contribute to open government. The research would indicate that open data does improve service delivery, improved transparency and hence accountability.

However, open data has not resulted in co-production of public services and therefore increased civic engagement. According to the empirical results, open data and open government are definitely not hand-in-glove concurrents. This must be taken into account in the corresponding initiatives also in the Danube Region.