The IADIS International Conference e-Democracy, Equity and Social Justice 2011 was held in Rome, Italy, 20-22 July, 2011.

The IADIS e-Democracy, Equity and Social Justice 2011 Conference aimed to encourage and foster efforts of researchers and practitioners by sharing cutting-edge research, innovations, models, theories and strategies that address issues and challenges related to cultivating online communities for grassroots democracy, equity and social justice.

The IADIS International Conference e-Democracy, Equity and Social Justice 2011 received 34 submissions from more than 6 countries. Each submission had been anonymously reviewed by an average of five independent reviewers, to ensure that accepted submissions were of a high standard. Consequently only 6 full papers were approved which meant an acceptance rate below 17%. An extended version of the best paper was published in Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy Journal (ISSN: 1750-6166), in the IADIS International Journal on WWW/Internet (ISSN: 1645-7641), and also in other selected journals, including journals from Inderscience.

The submissions were accepted under the following main areas:

**Citizenship**
- Unleashing the power of citizens in developing countries to use the Internet to drive their own social & political development agenda

**Digital divide**
- Achievement of equity by bridging the digital divide and promoting critical and digital literacies

**Participation**
- Provision of effective online platforms for meaningful participation of citizens

**Access**
- Optimization of wider access to democratic dialogues through successful community cultivation

**Community cultivation**
- Enhance the benefits of social development interventions through the use of digital, wireless and mobile technologies for cultivating communities to conduct inquiry and socio-political action

**Sustainability**
- Facilitating sustainable grassroots, bottom up co-created solutions and approaches to leadership, human rights, and civil society development

**E-mentoring**
- Reports and reflections on the successes and failures of deploying e-mentoring strategies for raising political awareness, civic consciousness and community cultivation

**Transference**
- North-South, South-South, and public-private partnerships and collaboration for cocreation of online communities
Community Ownership & Strengthening
- Studies of efforts of involving citizens as stakeholders in initiatives to promote democracy, social justice and equity by strengthening their capabilities and promoting their involvement in online communities.

Besides the presentation of full papers and short papers, the conference also included one keynote presentation from an internationally distinguished researcher, Dr. Christopher Walsh, Senior Lecturer of Educational ICT and Professional Development, The Open University, United Kingdom.

Keynote Presentation:

RETHINKING TECHNOLOGIES FOR PARTICIPATION, EQUITY, SOCIAL JUSTICE, AND DEMOCRACY by Dr. Christopher Walsh, Senior Lecturer of Educational ICT and Professional Development, The Open University, United Kingdom

Abstract:
Cultivating digital and online platforms and communities to sustain grassroots participation, equity, social justice and democracy remains a significant obstacle, while issues of citizenship, access and inclusion, are even more difficult to adequately address with, and through technologies. While a variety of models and interventions have been proposed and implemented, more attention needs to focus on aligning the micro-macro nexus of research and practice, to leverage technologies to disrupt existing exclusionary structures, practices and discourses, and to impact policy change. This paper presents three unique case studies that document the ways information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be leveraged to impact on participation, equity, social justice, and democracy. The first highlights a practitioner research study in New York City’s Chinatown where immigrant students used ICTs to creatively redesign school history textbooks and disrupt racist and exclusionary discourses they encountered in school texts and their lived experience. A second case study showcases the innovative ways a small community-based organisation in Thailand collaborated with local and international partners to design a peer-based online HIV/AIDS outreach and prevention programme, In conclusion I present the ways English in Action (EIA), a large-scale project (£50 million over 9 years) is working to improve the English proficiency of 25 million people in Bangladesh through school-based professional development approaches, mobile technologies (The Open University) and the mass media (The BBC World Trust). This paper argues that technology alone is inconsequential in realising equity and social justice. Rather building trust, forging strategic partnerships, and co-designing dynamic participatory mechanisms to continuously rework and rethink access to knowledge for ‘ordinary’ citizens is needed in addressing today’s social and economic challenges. Individuals, organizations and governments must be prepared to adapt their use of technologies to contexts and circumstances—in ways that genuinely take into account—its ongoing impact on those being invited or expected to participate. Otherwise technologies on their own will do little to disrupt existing hegemonic structures that work to maintain the status quo and undermine social justice and democracy.

Conference Best Paper:

DIGITAL LOCAL AGENDA – BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN EUROPE by Iva Walterova, EPMA - European Projects and Management Agency, Czech Republic

Abstract:
The paper explores the issue of inclusion of all into eGovernment services in Europe with the help of Digital Local Agenda (DLA). Information and Communication Technologies are essential for today’s society and economy; however, the problem of exclusion of various groups from the emerging digital society – the digital divide – persists. The paper explores causes for the digital divide. Solutions to the problem are then explored noting that many experts look to DLA as being one of the remedies, since it is designed to be customized to local conditions. This paper therefore explores the option of DLA as a solution, providing the reader briefly with several examples of the Agenda being applied through European
projects. The paper then concludes that DLA should be considered when looking for an answer to the persisting digital gap in Europe.


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