

## Editorial

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As I have written before in this Editorial column, an important test of the internationalisation of any academic journal is the extent to which its contributing authors are based in countries other than that of the Editor or indeed the journal's publisher. Moreover, the extent to which those authors are drawing the readership of the journal into the experiences of many different countries also contributes to this internationalisation. For a journal that lays claim to being '*an international journal of government and democracy in the information age*', it is an imperative that these 'measures' of internationalisation are realised. As with so many of the editions of *Information Polity*, this editor is pleased to report these criteria being fulfilled in its pages. Nine different nationalities are represented by authors in this edition: Swedish, Dutch, Belgian, Polish, Danish, North American, Slovenian, German and French. Some authors are writing about experiences within their own country. Others have written about pan-national activities, including global approaches to measurement in e-government and policy approaches in Europe to the development of e-commerce.

In the first two articles in this edition, the authors separately write critically of measurement regimes in e-government, regimes which purport systematically to delineate e-government. Put together these articles provide a valuable resource for those who seek to improve these measurement regimes as well as providing thought provoking criticism of general interest to the readership of this journal. Janssens and his colleagues provide a sustained critique of 18 international comparative eGovernment studies and warn governments against taking action on the basis of these studies without deep consideration and reflection. Careful interpretation of the results of these studies is a necessary prelude to action, though it is one that governments may neglect. As Janssens and his colleagues conclude "*these studies are much more than mere theoretical exercises without any real policy consequences. A crucial effort in the interpretation of studies thus has to be made to determine what it is that is actually measured*". Kunstelj and Vintar in the second of these articles present the results of what must be the most exhaustive of all academic studies of measurement regimes in e-government. Their plea is for an approach to measurement that is more holistic than has typically been the case. Like Janssens et al. they too recognise the latent determinism of measurement regimes as they have evolved and call for a new holism that, given this propensity for delineation and determinism within measurement systems, will steer the field in the direction that conforms to its own rhetoric – that of providing integrated services "based on user's needs and problems".

The two articles that follow are 'country studies' of the kind with which this journal has majored during the past 2 years. The first of these articles looks at heady visions of an information society in Sweden and the shortcomings that have succeeded these visions. The second examines systems failure in Poland in the context of confusing policy and legal instruments. Separately they offer insights into a particular country, together they point up further what readers to this journal have seen in many of the studies presented, the underperformance of ICT-inspired programmes and projects, when assessed against the objectives set for them. Lofgren and Hall, in the Swedish study, offer a comment that has resonance in many countries – "*the new institutions set up to manage 'the future' have in many cases become 'garbage cans' for issues the traditional "institutions" have not been capable of managing. Moreover, they have in confrontation with old institutions become omitted from actual influence*". Pawlowska's perspective speaks to the

present rather than the future: the present day development of large computer systems. As with Lofgren and Hall, her conclusions will have a ring of recognition for commentators and practitioners in many countries “*In the end, looking at the strategic documents of e-government development in Poland, the already accomplished or planned ICT projects, legal regulations previously passed or being considered, and organizational structures, we can hardly find any connecting line between them. It looks as if the public administration in Poland wasn't prepared to deal with the network reality that emerged around it*”.

The three articles that follow next in this edition look at ways in which existing organisations and institutions are challenged by the potential for change that accompanies the application of new technologies. The first of these, by Wagenaar and Soeperman, looks at a crucial, functional area of government, that of Policing. Their study looks at different ways in which challenge and change, under the weight of the case for more integrated systems developments in Policing, might be interpreted. From a British perspective their article is timely, touching as it does upon a debate that has recently been fore-grounded surrounding the perceived need to impose enhanced information and intelligence sharing upon the fragmented information management structures of numerous Police Forces. Their article traces in detail new accommodations over ‘common pool’ information resources that are emerging between the Police Forces of The Netherlands. In his work on ‘virtual policy communities’ [VPC], Bekkers shows also how new approaches to on-line policy debating through the development of *de facto* VPCs challenges “*the existing positions of politicians and civil servants in public administration*”. With the primacy of each set of actors deeply challenged it is hard to see how VPCs can be fully incorporated into policy making without more fundamental change being designed into national governance arrangements. Snijkers offers a further dimension to debates such as those raised both by Wagenaar and Soeperman and Bekkers when he examines the importance of trust in establishing agreement needed to make change successful in cross-boundary examples of administrative change. The administrative advantages of interdependence, says Snijkers, is accompanied by new forms of vulnerability and his research shows that this vulnerability can best be countered by the building of trust.

Finally, in this edition, the article of Andersen and his colleagues from Germany, France and the US, brings us to a focus upon a specific policy field, one that is crucial to the development of the information society, that of e-commerce policy in the European context. In this vital area of national and international development, one that also has a crucial bearing upon the ‘e-readiness’ of citizens to engage commercially, governmentally and democratically, their study shows both national approaches to e-commerce development in Germany, France and Denmark have been less advanced and far-sighted than those of the US, for example. Here we have a sharp contrast between the heady visions of an information society proffered by governments at all levels, on the one hand, and the apparent lack of such a driving, shaping and consistent vision of e-commerce, on the other, at least so far as certain European countries are concerned.

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