Theory and Methods in Digital Government

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The Theory and Methods in Digital Government Minitrack invites contributions that integrate approaches from diverse disciplinary domains—such as public administration, information systems, information science, and political science—to advance the theoretical understanding of e-government impacts and transformations. These multi-, cross-, and interdisciplinary perspectives are vital for producing robust studies that underpin sustainable and democratic applications of digital government in policies and practices. Theories and methods are fundamental to ensuring the validity and reliability of research, offering tools to navigate the complex dynamics of digital transformation in the public sector.

This Minitrack emphasizes the importance of testing and refining existing theories and methodologies to better capture the rapidly evolving reality of digital government. Fresh theoretical and methodological perspectives are essential for comprehending and critically analyzing the shifting practices associated with the integration of ICT in the public sector.

The Minitrack features one session comprising three papers, each of which provides insights into relevant theories and methods that deepen our understanding of the diverse impacts of e-government. The presented papers demonstrate how theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches can illuminate pressing issues in digital governance.

The Minitrack includes one session with three papers. The three papers illustrate and discuss relevant theories and methods to help better understanding the diverse impacts of e-government.

The first title "Conceptualizing the Roles of Information and Digital Technologies in Digital Global Climate Governance" is authored by Tove Engvall. This paper offers a nuanced theoretical examination of the roles information and digital technologies play in global climate governance. Drawing on structuration theory, it conceptualizes how digital and informational tools can foster understanding, facilitate action, and ensure accountability in climate governance. Engvall identifies three key roles—interpretative, facilitative, and normative—that enable digital technologies to support governance processes effectively. The paper proposes these roles as a foundation for future research and the development of digital services aimed at addressing global climate challenges. This theoretical framing enriches the discourse on digital governance by highlighting its potential to address complex, multi-level challenges like climate change.

The second paper titled: "The Value of e-Government for Fragile States: A Scoping Review" is authored by Abdinassir Sagar. This study systematically reviews existing research on e-government to explore its value in fragile states. It begins by conceptually defining fragile states and then examines how e-government initiatives can enhance state authority, improve administrative capacity, and restore governmental legitimacy. Sagar's findings reveal the transformative potential of e-government in fragile contexts while also identifying significant research gaps, particularly in areas such as political control and operational challenges in these environments. The study underscores the need for more focused research on the intersection of e-government and fragile states, emphasizing the importance of tailored digital solutions to address their unique challenges.

The third paper titled "Digital Citizenship in the Institution Swedish Public Libraries: A Discursive Approach" is co-authored by Ahmed Kaharevic, Helena Iacobaeus, and Mariana Gustafsson. This paper investigates the discursive construction of digital citizenship within Swedish public libraries, situating the analysis within the broader framework of Sweden's digital government initiatives. By employing a discursive approach, the authors respond to the academic call for more nuanced theoretical insights into digital citizenship. Drawing on data from the

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Swedish National Digitalization Strategy, the Swedish Library Act, and interviews with library staff, the study explores the evolving concept of digital citizenship. The findings identify active citizenship as a dominant theme, reflecting high expectations for individual agency and responsibility. However, the study also uncovers emergent ideas of inclusive citizenship, revealing tensions and negotiations regarding what digital citizenship entails. These findings challenge assumptions of inclusivity in digital government and underscore the need to critically examine the values and expectations underpinning digital transformation in public institutions.

The three papers in this session illustrate the critical role of theories and methods in understanding and shaping the impacts of digital government. Each contribution highlights different aspects of digital governance—global climate initiatives, fragile state contexts, and digital citizenship—demonstrating the diversity and complexity of the field. Together, they underscore the importance of robust theoretical frameworks and methodological rigor in addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by digital transformation. These insights collectively advance the discourse on sustainable and inclusive digital governance