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Welcome to a new issue of JeDEM! This issue addresses topics related to blockchain technology, AI readiness, e-democracy, e-government services, e-justice, and data-driven decision-making by local governments.

The article by Zein and Twinomurinzi *Blockchain Technology in Lands Registration: A Systematic Literature Review* focuses on the potential and impediments of using blockchain in the application of land registration in low-income countries. Their study uncovers diverse approaches to BT implementation that are influenced by local conditions and government structures, but also that whilst there is a burgeoning interest in BT, actual implementations remain limited. The key barriers include resistance from government officials and a lack of local BT skills. Public blockchains have shown a high tendency for adoption, indicating a shift towards more transparent relationships between governments and citizens. The Hyperledger Fabric platform emerges as a popular choice due to its ability to provide secure, scalable, and robust solutions, however, there is a lack of clarity regarding the consensus mechanisms used, indicating a potential gap in current research practices. The study recommends an incremental approach to BT implementation, starting with non-threatening, transparent processes that could be expanded as part of broader government reform programs. They urge for more empirical research in order to evaluate the impacts and navigate the associated sociotechnical, legal, and institutional challenges.

Shonhe and Kalobe's article *A Glimpse into Botswana's AI Readiness Landscape* presents insights from their case study into Botswana's AI readiness landscape. Botswana's AI readiness is examined from different perspectives, including Oxford Insights' Government AI Readiness Index (AIRI) (2022) and evidence of AI application case studies in Botswana. The study identified seven factors hindering successful AI adoption in Botswana, including 1) the lack of an AI strategy, 2) the limited capacity to support change, 3) an immature technology sector incapable of supporting innovation, 4) the lack of skills to support AI development, 5) insufficient technological infrastructure to support AI, 6) insufficient data to train AI models, and 7) the existence of only few use cases in the public sector. Despite these hurdles, the country is putting in efforts to digitally transform and there are opportunities for improvement. The authors recommend the government first develops an AI strategy to create a national vision for AI adoption to address the identified issues.

The article by Younus, Suswanta, and Al-Hamdi *Changes in the Mindset of People in Pakistan about their Democratic System since the Regime Change* addresses the political situation after the regime change in Pakistan in early 2023. Using a qualitative analysis of news sites, blogs, and social media, the authors examined how the regime change impacted the citizens of Pakistan and what changes in the dynamics of their political thinking occurred. For example, the regime change led to more collectivism in voting behavior and to a change from 'state-centric' to 'citizen-centric' thinking, in which decisions are made more often in the interest of the citizen.

Abdalla, Kassim and Yeap's article *Citizens' Intention to Use the Palestinian e-government Services Portal – An extension of UMEGA* discusses their quantitative study using a revised version of the Unified Model of Electronic Government Adoption (UMEGA). The study's objective was to examine factors determining Palestinian citizens' attitudes and behavioral intentions to use the recently launched e-government services portal. Using a combination of purposive and quota sampling, 415 responses were collected from citizens and then analysed using PLS-SEM. The findings revealed that performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and opportunity cost risk significantly influenced citizens' attitudes, which in turn, positively influenced their behavioral intentions. Applying the research model in different scenarios for assessing e-government acceptance in other regions and countries may help explain e-government adoption dynamics on a larger scale and show context-specific challenges and opportunities.

Abou Refaie and Santuber's article *Risks and challenges to e-justice principles: governing remote work, online hearings and the use of social media in Chilean Courts* addresses scientists' understanding of the relationship between justice, digital technology, and government. Based on a qualitative study involving thirty-one interviews with key stakeholders from the Chilean judiciary system, they challenge the dominant narrative which promotes e-justice as "better justice". The interviews show how the e-justice principles are questioned by the implementation of digital technologies by court systems in Chile. The study reveals risks to e-justice work and due process in two major areas: bypassing traditional media scrutiny and limited governance of ready-to-use technologies in remote work, online hearings, and the use of social media in judicial communications.

We conclude this issue with the article *Critical Success Factors for Data-Driven Decision-Making at Local Government: The Case of Indonesia* by Sayogo, Yuli, and Amalia. This study identifies the factors affecting the local government official's propensity to use data for decision-making and outlines the

components of the effective application of data-driven decision-making in local government. Using extensive in-depth semi-structured interviews with executives at the agencies and offices of the Regency of Bojonegorothey, the authors show that the key factors that influence officials' inclination to use data in their decision-making are accountability pressures and the hierarchical, bureaucratic structures. The authors note that three key aspects determine the practical application of data-driven decision-making, including transforming quality data into knowledge, ardent and perceptive staff, and appropriate tools or apps. At the same time, additional aspects such as culture and norms, institutional contexts, rules, and regulations impact the three key aspects.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue!

