

SYMPOSIUM ISSUE ON OPEN GOVERNMENT

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Special issue on open government: An introduction / Mila Gascó

Abstract: Public administrations around the world have embarked on open government initiatives and have worked to redefine their relationship with citizens and with each other. Researchers and academicians have recently also focused on studying what governments are implementing. Still, there are gaps and difficulties that both practitioners and academicians need to tackle. This special issue aims at contributing to the open government field in this respect.

Open government and democracy: A research review / Karin Hansson, Kheira Belkacem & Love Ekenberg

Abstract: The concept of Open Government, having been promoted widely in the past five years, has promised a broader notion than E-government, as supposed to fundamentally transform governments to become more open and participative and collaborative. Unfortunately, this has not significantly enhanced a set of fundamental problems regarding e-government. One of the problems is that the underlying democratic ideology is rarely clearly expressed. In this paper we have therefore constructed a framework for the analysis of Open Government from a democratic perspective, to explore the research foundation of Open Government and the types of research missing. We have looked closely at the notion of democracy in peer-reviewed journals on Open Government from 2009 to 2013, focusing on discussions of some fundamental issues regarding democracy and the type of solutions suggested. We have found that, despite seemingly good intentions and an extensive rhetoric, there is still an apparent lack of adequate tools in which public deliberation and representation are addressed in any meaningful sense.

There are two main important observations herein: (i) the rhetoric in the dominant discourse supports the concept of Open Government formulated by the Obama Administration as transparency, participation and collaboration, but in practice the focus is predominantly on transparency and information exchange, while ignoring fundamental democratic issues regarding participation and collaboration, and (ii) the concept of the public is inadequately considered as a homogenous entity rather than a diversified group with different interests, preferences and abilities.

Challenges and concerns of open government: A case of government 3.0 in Korea / Taewoo Nam

Abstract: This study, focusing on the case of the Government 3.0 Drive in Korea, analyzes the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of open government efforts for open data, freedom of information, enhanced governance with citizens, and inter-organizational collaboration. Using the qualitative data from unstructured interviews with public managers and open government experts, the SWOT analysis found serious challenges around ongoing open government efforts. Open government does not come easy and cheap, but it is rather

resourceful innovation that requires substantial investments in soliciting meaningful civic inputs and establishing systematic management of various efforts. The paper suggests that contemporary governments should consider more realistic, practical and tangible approaches to achieving ideals for open government.

Assessing public preferences and the level of transparency in government using an exploratory approach / Maria Cucciniello, Nicola Bellè, Greta Nasi, & Giovanni Valotti

Abstract: Any information disclosed by governments should serve the purpose it is meant to fulfil. This is an underlying pillar of transparency. Our paper assesses whether the information citizens consider to be most relevant for interaction with the authorities is actually disclosed.

Our research was conducted on the population of the 117 Italian provincial capitals. A sample of 500 Italian citizens were interviewed with the purpose of understanding which type of information they consider most relevant given the choice of institutional, political, financial, and service delivery-related information. The results indicate that Italian provincial capitals currently fail to publish the information that citizens consider to be most relevant: despite differences in opinions among users, the sample we analysed tends to rate the importance of service-delivery transparency and financial transparency higher than institutional or political transparency, whereas most information disclosed by Italian provincial capitals is associated with data they are obliged to disclose in order to comply with transparency regulations.

Open government and social media: A focus on transparency / Panom Gunawong

Abstract: Social media have become new tools for the public sector to communicate with the public and to realize the idea of an open government that embraces transparency, participation and collaboration. This paper explores the adoption and use of social media applications (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) by Thailand's public sector and social media's contribution to transparency. In total, 172 public agencies representing the central, provincial and local administration levels were investigated. Evidently, the social media applications in question have not been widely adopted and used in the Thai public sector as indicated by the small fraction of public agencies considered to be active users. Nevertheless, Facebook was found to be the only application keenly used by public agencies at all three administration levels (18 public agencies in total). An examination of their Facebook messages revealed that Facebook was employed mainly for disseminating news updates that did not actually increase the agencies' transparency. It is thus apparent that for the Thai public sector, social media use to achieve transparency is not open to discussion. Instead, the Thai government's first priority is to encourage public agencies to merely adopt and use social media at all, before it can focus on the most effective ways that agencies can employ such media.

Opening Government: Designing Open Innovation Processes to Collaborate with External Problem Solvers / Ines Mergel

Abstract: Open government initiatives in the U.S. government focus on three main aspects: transparency, participation, and collaboration. Especially the collaboration mandate is relatively unexplored in the literature. In practice, government organizations recognize the need to include external problem solvers into their internal innovation creation processes. This is partly derived from a sense of urgency to improve the efficiency and quality of government service delivery. Another formal driver is the America Competes Act that instructs agencies to search for opportunities to meaningfully promote excellence in technology, education, and science. Government agencies are responding to these requirements by using open innovation approaches to invite citizens to crowdsource and peer produce solutions to public management

problems. These distributed innovation processes occur at all levels of the U.S. government and it is important to understand what the design elements are that are used to create innovative public management ideas. This article systematically reviews existing government crowdsourcing and peer production initiatives and shows that after agencies have defined their public management problem, they go through four different phases of the open innovation process: (1) Idea generation through crowdsourcing; (2) Incubation of submitted ideas with peer voting and collaborative improvements of favorite solutions; (3) Validation with a proof of concept of implementation possibilities; and (4) Reveal of the selected solution and the (internal) implementation of the winning idea. Participation and engagement is incentivized both with monetary and non-monetary rewards, which lead to tangible solutions as well as intangible innovation outcomes, such as increased public awareness.

Benchmarks for evaluating the progress of open data adoption: usage, limitations, and lessons learned / Iryna Susha, Anneke Zuiderwijk, Marijn Janssen, & Åke Grönlund

Abstract: : Public organizations release their data for use by the public to open government. Various benchmarks for evaluating the progress of open data adoption have emerged recently. In order to help bring about a better understanding of the common and differentiating elements in open data benchmarks and to identify the methodologies and metrics affecting their variation, this paper compares open data benchmarks and describes lessons learned from their analysis. An interpretive meta-analysis approach was used and five benchmarks were compared with regard to meta-data (key concepts, themes, and metaphors), meta-methods (methodologies underlying the benchmarks) and meta-theories (theoretical assumptions at the foundation of the benchmarks). It was found that each benchmark has its strengths and weaknesses and is applicable in specific situations. Since the open data benchmarks have a different scope and focus and use different methodologies, they produce different results in terms of country ranks. There is an obvious gap in both the literature and benchmarks regarding the evolution of end-user practices and individual adoption of open data. Furthermore, lessons are drawn for the development of more comprehensive open data benchmarks and open government evaluation in general.

Open government data: An assessment of the Spanish municipal situation / Carlos Carrasco & Xavier Sobrepere

Abstract: There is a growing quantity of data being generated in all aspects of our lives. Individuals and organizations produce and collect a broad range of different types of data in order to perform their tasks. Governments are particularly significant in this respect, both because of the quantity and centrality of the data they collect, but also because most government data is public data by law, and therefore could be made openly available for public use. Despite a growing consensus that Open Government in general and Open Data in particular are good both for governments and for society at large, there is no clear way to enable empirical analysis and quantitative measurements of Open Data Government initiatives. Our research uses a holistic approach proposed by the OECD that includes all stages in the deployment of an Open Government Data initiative: Strategy, Implementation, Organization, Communication, Interaction and Impact. The analysis shows that Spanish municipalities can be divided into three groups: municipalities that are performing reasonably well (A), municipalities that are doing something but not as much as the first group (B), and municipalities that are doing very little or almost nothing (C). The research also draws two basic similarities between groups A and B, and two types of differences between them. Another conclusion is that the different dimensions explain partly (more than the 72% of the variance) the difference between actual and expected

performances supporting indirectly the OECD's framing and the probable existence of a pathway towards successful Open Government Data projects.

The perceived impact of open inspection data on the quality of education in Dutch primary schools:
A parent perspective / Dennis de Kool & Victor Bekkers

Abstract: Open government has become a prominent issue for governments in recent years. Many studies focus on the data published by governments ('supply') instead of on the needs of potential users ('demand'). In this study, we investigated the perceived impact of open data provided by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education. The research question is: what is the perceived impact of open inspection data, as used by parents, on the quality of education in Dutch primary schools? The empirical data have been gathered by both surveys and interviews. The results of the surveys show that both the factual use and the perceived usefulness of the Inspectorate's open data are relatively low. Parents want all individuals and institutions in general to have more influence on the quality of primary education. The results also indicate that the increasingly frequent visits to the Inspectorate of Education's website are linked to parents' desire to have more influence on the quality of primary education. Finally, as parents are more involved in the schools or visit the Inspectorate's website more often, they want the participation councils to have more influence. Nevertheless, Dutch parents highly estimate the average quality of the education provided by primary schools. However, when their involvement increases, their assessments of their school's performance decrease. Frequent visits to the Inspectorate's website are related to lower performance assessments. So, open inspection data are potentially valuable for (critical) parents, especially when attention is also paid to 'soft' quality indicators.