

Preface

On January 2009, President Obama signed the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government. The memorandum declared the new Administration's commitment to creating an unprecedented level of openness in government and establishing a system linking three principles: transparency, public participation and collaboration.

Since then, not only federal agencies in the United States but, also, public administrations around the world have embarked on open government initiatives and have worked to redefine their relationship with citizens and with each other. What's more, on September 20th, 2011, eight governments gathered in New York to launch the Open Government Partnership, a new multilateral initiative to promote open government.

The benefits attributed to open government are many and by no means universally shared. They include the claims that open government leads to more effective decision making and services, safeguards against corruption, enables public scrutiny, and promotes citizens' trust in government. Actually, there is compelling evidence that properly implemented and enforced open government frameworks can support a number of benefits for governments and societies.

In the academic literature, openness has been approached from two different perspectives: (Meijer et al. 2012): transparency and participation. The literature on transparency revolves around terms such as freedom of information, Internet, active dissemination of information, access to documents and usability of websites (Curtin and Mendes 2011). The core question tackled by these works is: what is being made visible/transparent? Literature discusses, among other issues, the nature and scope of transparency, the usefulness of information, and the timing of the release of documents. The premise underlying these studies is that transparency yields to accountability. At the same time, a more accountable government is a more legitimate one (Sandóval-Almazán 2011). Finally, legitimacy strengthens public trust in the government (Hood 2011; Hazell and Worthy 2010; Jaeger and Bertot 2010).

The literature on participation has aimed at answering the following question: whose voice is heard? Both theoretical and empirical studies have focused on the interactive design of public policies, the processes of public consultation, or the

involvement of stakeholders. Many of those works have attempted to assess differences and inequalities in terms of citizen participation (Meijer et al. 2012).

Although, the links between transparency and participation may be evident, this relationship has hardly been explored by the academic literature. Only very recently, and under the open government framework, some authors have started to work on it. Noveck (2009) is one of them. She refers to this interaction and connects access to information to new ways of citizen participation. She also suggests that technology will play a key role in overcoming those barriers that hinder transparency and participation.

In the real world, however, the speed of events and the “need” to implement open government projects not to be left behind have given rise to confusion and ambiguity. Although, many of the initiatives have been based on opening data and on promoting open action, generally, speaking, governments have followed different directions and interpretations when it has come to implement them. As a result, nowadays, it can be said that the development of open government is unequal and heterogeneous. There is confusion about the concept itself (what an open government initiative is and what is not, difference with the e-government term, newness of the term...), about its implementation process and about its real impact.

Given this global context, and taking into account both the need of academicians and practitioners, it is the intention of this book to shed light on the open government concept and, in particular:

- To provide comprehensive knowledge of recent major developments of open government around the world.
- To analyze the importance of open government efforts for public governance.
- To provide insightful analysis about those factors that are critical when designing, implementing and evaluating open government initiatives.
- To discuss how contextual factors affect open government initiatives’ success or failure.
- To explore the existence of theoretical models of open government.
- To propose strategies to move forward and to address future challenges in an international context.

This collective work is structured in 13 chapters. **Esteve Sanz** opens the book with an interesting reflection. His chapter investigates how the cultural structure of the Internet interacts with rationalistic bureaucratic cultures through the open government discourse, that is, what the interaction between the Internet culture (the culture of openness) and the bureaucratic culture of secrecy is. In order to do so, after a theoretical and conceptual discussion around the meaning of Internet culture, the chapter uses the case study of the open government policy of the Obama administration to explore how the cultural code openness/closeness is penetrating the core of the bureaucratic culture (*Open Government and Their Cultural Transitions*).

Four more chapters present and assess open government strategies in other parts of the world. It is the case of the work of **Pablo Sanabria, Cristian Pliscoff and Ricardo Gomes**. The authors review the situation of three South American countries (Colombia, Chile and Brazil), with different economies, populations and insti-

tutions, which have recently undertook a particular set of open government practices with the common goal of increasing transparency, citizen participation and, eventually, government legitimacy (*e-Government Practices in South American Countries: Echoing a Global Trend or Really Improving Governance? The Experiences of Colombia, Chile and Brazil*).

Evika Karamagioli, Eleni-Revekka Staïou, and Dimitris Gouscos's chapter also assesses a national strategy: OpenGov.gr. This Greek initiative was designed to serve the principles of transparency, deliberation, collaboration and accountability and includes two basic initiatives: open calls for the recruitment of public administration officials and electronic deliberation for participatory rule making. The authors describe and analyze it as a top-down e-participation effort (*Can Open Government Models Contribute to More Collaborative Ways of Governance?—An Assessment of the Greek OpenGov Initiative*).

Mentxu Ramilo, Iñaki Ortiz, Alberto Ortiz de Zárate and Venan Llonan present the worldwide-recognized successful case of the Basque Country, one of the 17 Spanish Autonomous Communities. Their assessment takes into account three different perspectives: (1) an analytical perspective aimed at understanding the political and organizational implications involved in the open government policy, (2) a practical perspective, given by two of the authors, who took part in the implementation of the project, and (3) a citizen perspective, needed to judge their real involvement (*Open Government in the Basque Country*).

Finally, **Benedetta Trivellato, Roberto Boselli and Dario Cavenago** provide a picture of some issues that should be considered during the design and implementation of open government initiatives, based on the analysis of four Italian case studies at the sub-national level in the northern regions of Lombardy and Piedmont. The aim of these case studies' description and analysis is to provide a comprehensive picture of their objectives and of the tools which were employed to pursue them, as well as of the difficulties encountered (*Design and Implementation of Open Government Initiatives at the Sub-National Level: Lessons from Italian Cases*).

Although, the idea of openness in public administrations and organizations is not new, the current spreading use of information systems and technological advances in modern societies has attained new information demands and claims (Sandóval-Almazán 2011). In particular, social media is used as public information tools. It radically reduces the cost of information diffusion and makes sharing with the citizenry feasible and useful (Lee and Kwak 2012; Harrison et al. 2012). Also, the publication of information in standard, open and interoperable formats increases its use and re-use (De La Fuente 2011; Coroján and Campos 2011).

Several chapters have referred to these two important tools: social media and open data. In their chapter, **Karan Riarh and Jeffrey Roy** examine social media trends and usage at the local level in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. They are particularly interested in how social media is purported to be a driver of citizen engagement and participative capacities. Thus, their discussion contributes to shed light on the so-called participation dimension of open government (*The Impact of Social Media on Government and Democracy: An Examination of Municipal Usage in Nova, Scotia, Canada*).

More chapters have focused on open data, which reflects what is happening on the field: governments are implementing more open data than social media initiatives. Despite the number of contributions focusing on this topic, chapters' approaches differ, not only from a conceptual perspective but, also, from an empirical one. The first one, **Albert Meijer, Josta de Hoog, Mark van Twist, Martijn van der Steen and Jorren Scherpenisse's** chapter, starts challenging existing impact assessments of open data. They argue that whether open data delivers its promise depends on specific, local interactions that can be managed and controlled to a limited extent. They use two cases (open data in public transportation and in policing in The Netherlands) to show the use of their perspective (*Understanding the Dynamics of Open Data. From Sweeping Statements to Complex Contextual Interactions*).

Anneke Zuiderwijk and Marijn Janssen complement the previous views and conduct a comprehensive review of open data barriers. Their work shows that many barriers can be identified with regard to data creation, publication, finding, analyzing, processing, discussion and providing feedback (*Barriers and Development Directions for the Publication and Usage of Open Data: A Socio-Technical View*).

In their chapter, **Isabell Egger-Peitler and Tobias Polzer** wonder whether and to what extent developments at European level and other factors have an effect on local efforts towards open data. They take the example of the city of Vienna, in Austria, finding a decoupling of supranational strategies and national implementation activities (*Open Data: European Ambitions and Local Efforts. Experiences from Austria*).

The last two works on open data go further and bring new concepts in. On one hand, the chapter by **Glenn Vancauwenberghe, Ezra Dessers, Joep Cromptvoets and Danny Vandenbroucke** explores in the region of Flanders (Belgium) whether coordination in the context of spatial data infrastructure (SDI) contributes to the degree of spatial data sharing. Their ultimate goal is to assess the potential contribution of SDI to the open data process (*Realizing Data Sharing: The Role of Spatial Data Infrastructures*).

On the other hand, **Gianluca Misuraca, Francesco Mureddu and David Osimo** provide an analysis based on a meta review and selected results of analysis of case studies to identify the characteristics and benefits resulting from applications of open and big data techniques and methodologies within the context of ICT solutions for collaborative governance and policy modelling (*Policy Making 2.0: Unleashing the Power of Big Data for Public Governance*).

The book ends with two interesting chapters which connect the concept of open government to other notions, proposing ideas to move forward in a creative and innovative way. The first of them, by **Jörn von Lucke and Katharina Große**, introduces the idea of open collaboration and presents strategies which go beyond participation of citizens or other stakeholders in the decision/preparation phase of the policy making process. Thus, the authors analyze the potential of opening up the latter stages of such process: implementation, monitoring and evaluation (*Open Government Collaboration: Opportunities and Challenges of Open Collaborating with and Within Government*).

Finally, **Marc Garriga and Júlia López** reflect upon the links of open government and smart cities, particularly when it comes to citizen empowerment and involvement in urban management decisions and in the delivery of public services. They also show that open government initiatives are needed in order for a smart city strategy to be successful (*The Role of Open Government in Smart Cities*).

In sum, the book presents a collection of chapters that is not comprehensive but that tackles different issues related to open government that may be of interest for both researchers and practitioners. It shows the state of open government in some parts of the world, at different administrative levels, and it draws insightful ideas regarding its implementation, but it also presents some interesting conceptual perspectives on transparency, participation and collaboration and on the use of social media and open data in achieving them. More could be said about open government. *Open Government. Opportunities and Challenges for Public Governance* is only a first approach to the field. I hope that the authors' contributions encourage the reader to keep strengthening the study and practice of open government around the world.

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