

Chapter 54

Is Open Data Enough? E-Governance Challenges for Open Government

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ABSTRACT

The article aims to investigate how key e-Governance dimensions related to openness, such as transparency and accountability, which are a necessary condition for reaching a high maturity of e-Government, may not be sufficient for open government. For this purpose, an interpretative framework to identify country attitudes towards Open Government is proposed and it is applied to two cases drawn from different legal, cultural and organisational backgrounds. Among the key findings of the article, the ‘attitudes mapping’ resulting from the application of the interpretative framework to the case studies points out the key role of different governance traditions in the path towards open government.

INTRODUCTION

The article aims to discuss the enforcement of open government initiatives in different countries, with a specific focus on Europe, through the examination of two specific case studies. It investigates the role of e-Governance and its related dimensions as key factors for the enactment of open government. Consequently, it is our assumption that open government initiatives impact different facets of inner and outer contexts of public sector information systems, where major issues still con-

cern the role of e-Governance, that is governance ‘with and of ICTs’ (G. Misuraca, 2012; 2007). Indeed, the organisational structures of public administrations and the mechanisms for citizens’ participation affect the typologies and dimensions of e-Governance that could enable the enactment of open government in countries with different legal frameworks. While open government ‘leader initiatives’ are currently being conducted mainly in “common law” countries, we are interested to better understand its implications in different legal and organisational systems. As a matter of fact,

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open government initiatives may require different e-Governance approaches in considering the growing role of constituencies (citizens/businesses) in the production of public value, as well as new organisational structures, policies, and capabilities for public employees and public managers. Notwithstanding the emphasis on open government as different from e-Government for the centrality of citizens with regards to Public Administration and the consequent role of public engagement, thus requiring alternative maturity models (G. Lee & Kwak, 2012), most of the initiatives actually focus mainly on open data. We believe that the latter is still associated to the centrality of Public Administration, thus, it should be related to higher level of maturity of e-Government characterised in literature by horizontal integration, accountability, transparency, data and application mobility, and ownership to data transferred to citizens (Andersen & Henriksen, 2006; Anderson, Henriksen, & Medaglia, 2012; J. Lee, 2010).

As a consequence, in this article we provide an interpretative framework to support the classification and mapping of the different initiatives in their path towards openness, identifying the actual configuration of e-Governance drivers. In order to address these issues, we first provide an overview of the debate on open government. We then present the research method adopted and the proposed interpretative model. This is then applied to two cases at country level (France and UK) drawn from different legal, cultural and organisational backgrounds. We conclude highlighting the policy implications for governance and public administration reform in the contexts under analysis, offering some recommendations for future research in the domain of open government.

BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATIONS

At the day of the re-election of Obama as President of the USA, the slogan used for his campaign, “*Forward*” can be easily associated to the open

government initiatives carried out by his administration during the first mandate, and followed up by many governments worldwide. The openness in government data is an important enabler for the promotion of transparency concerning the destination and use of public expenditure as well as the improvement in the quality of policy making. The latter becomes more evidence based to display the full economic and social impact of information, create services based on government data and to enhance the collaboration across government bodies, as well as between government and citizens. At the same time, the focus on openness allows the deployment of new added-values services and increases the awareness of citizens on specific issues, as well as their information about government policies, thus promoting accountability of public governance at large. Important examples of open government data can be found in the ambit of the Open Government Initiative (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/open>) carried out by the Obama Administration for promoting government transparency on a global scale. The most popular among its initiatives is the Data.gov, a platform considered to be very successful and which has already been used as a model by many countries. For instance, within the scope of Data.gov, the USA and India have developed an open source version called the Open Government Platform (OGPL - <http://www.opengovplatform.org/>), which can be downloaded and evaluated by any public entity as a resource rendering their data open and transparent.

With regard to Europe, several repositories of applications making use of open data have also been developed and made available. This is the case, at the European Commission level, of the portal publicdata.eu. Furthermore, at the national level several initiatives have been carried out, e.g., in Denmark (DigitaliserDK), France (data.gouv.fr), Italy (Dati.gov.it), Ireland (StatCentral), the Netherlands (Overheid.nl), Norway (data.norge.no), Spain (datos.gob.es), Sweden (Opengov.se)

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