

Assessing Open Government Performance through Three Public Administration Perspectives: Efficiency, Democratic Responsiveness, and Legal-rational Process

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Abstract: Open government is a growing feature of public administration in governments across the globe. Open government has long been considered vital to democratic society but, with the arrival of digital government, openness has become touted by governments that use information and communication technologies (ICT) without making the necessary legal and institutional reforms to support accountability and transparency. The intersection of openness and ICT challenges our approach to digital government in public administration practice and theory, and it calls for better theoretical frameworks to make sense of open government performance. In this paper, I propose a threefold framework of efficiency, democratic responsiveness, and legal-rational process. The framework is conceptually analyzed through four types of open government: budget transparency, citizen engagement, open data, and freedom of information. The analysis results in the creation of a set of measurement items that help to clarify important aspects of open government performance, and which can be used to generate indicators for evaluating open government initiatives.

Keywords: e-government, open government, performance measurement, transparency

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Introduction

Public administrators in many national governments have become familiar with the concept of open government as a result of a rise in national and international open government initiatives (Janssen, Charalabidis, and Zuiderwijk, 2012; Lathrop and Ruma, 2010; McDermott, 2010). These initiatives, of which the Open Government Partnership (OGP) is the most emblematic and comprehensive project to date, bring together many traditional concerns of transparency, accountability, and efficiency with promise for new tools of information and communications technology (ICT) (Dawes and Helbig, 2010; Yu and Robinson, 2012). But as governments experiment with this fusion of openness and technology, they are creating questions about performance measurement that need to be answered. These comprise questions such as: Is an open program necessarily an accountable program? Is a technological solution to a problem necessarily fair and just? Where should the line be drawn between transparency and privacy? There are many other questions such as these that can be given answers through performance analysis.

While performance analysis can potentially begin to answer some of the important questions about the achievements of open government, there is a deeper theoretical question of public administration that also needs to be addressed, which is *how* to measure performance in policy and program environments that are crisscrossed by many organizations, sectors, levels of government, legal stipulations, policy areas, and political authorities. Open government efforts are an understudied topic of such governance complexity despite the fact that their character as open, multi-stakeholder, and collaborative initiatives is uniquely organized by complex design and implementation processes. Thus the issue of *governance complexity* constitutes the environment of open government initiatives and is the overarching theoretical problem tackled by this paper. In doing so, four main categories of open government initiatives are selected in order to form a performance framework around current practice. Specific open government programs in those categories, as well as scholarly research, are discussed to summarize what we know about the characteristics and trade-offs of performance measurement. The paper organizes the problem of governance complexity and performance analysis by

identifying three perspectives of public administration drawn from several key theorists in public administration, but most recently the work of David Rosenbloom (1983). These perspectives are: 1) Efficiency; 2) Government responsiveness; and 3) Legal-rational authority.

The Growth of Open Government

Open government and government transparency are similar, overlapping concepts used in public administration and political science (Lathrop and Ruma, 2010; Mulgan, 2014). However, the concept of transparency in government has been in academic currency for longer than the concept of open government. Transparency became a promising characteristic of government reforms in the early 1990s in response to the influence of public choice economics on the New Public Management (NPM) (Hood, 2007). Transparency in public choice economics promised a way to solve information asymmetries between government, citizens, and the private sector in order to decentralize decision-making authority and provide a basis for valuing government goods on the open market. Christopher Hood acknowledged not only this reforming pressure in the rise of transparency, but also observed the broader appeal of the idea for wide areas of government service provision and public participation. In his influential 1991 paper *A Public Management for All Seasons*, he says “concern with process may cause the emphasis to go on the achievement of *maximum transparency* in public operations - for example, extensive public reporting requirements, 'angels' advocates' (the practice of incorporating representatives of 'public interest' groups on corporate boards), freedom of information laws, 'notice and comment' procedures, rather than simple 'bottom line ethics'” (p.13).

Modern reforms promulgating broad benefits of transparency were first implemented on a large scale in the European Commission's attempt to solve governance challenges around questions of legitimate decision-making bodies (Peterson, 1995), and they were also part of innovations in the 1990s in Australia and New Zealand to make public

spending more efficient (Campos and Pradhan, 1996). Since that time, transparency has become one of those “magic concepts” in public administration, such as “accountability” and “governance”, that benefits from its broad but rose-tinted appeal (Pollitt and Hupe, 2011). It has been connected in empirical studies to trust of government (e.g., Wang, 2002; Alam, Kabir, and Chaudhri, 2014), citizen satisfaction (e.g., Halvorsen, 2003; Kim and Lee, 2012), and accountability (e.g., Ahn and Bretschneider, 2011). At the far end of the open government spectrum of “radical transparency”, each stage in government decision-making and implementation is expected to be transparent (Mergel, 2012). Modern information and communication technologies (ICT) have increased the attention given to transparency as a tool for better accountability and performance in government (Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes, 2010; Jaeger and Bertot, 2010).

But the aspirations of open government represent a big challenge beyond the mere presentation of information – a challenge open government has yet to convincingly meet. And scholars have acknowledged such limitations. Heald (2006) has noted that transparency should be seen as an instrumental value, not an intrinsic one. There is also a growing realization that transparency policies can hide as many public administrative opportunities as it reveals ((Roberts, 2005; Worthy, 2010). In discussing a raft of reforms that governments use to try to improve transparency, Yu and Robinson (2012) note that “open government” has gained more frequent use in the last decade. However, the role of accountability and governance responsiveness that is properly understood to be integral to open government has often been missing. The largest implementation of the efforts to address the shortfalls and potential of open government has been the multi-country project of the OGP, which was launched in 2011 by seven countries including the United States. The US had itself already been making steps towards meeting demands of citizens for more open government as President Obama announced the Open Government Directive in 2009, which called upon federal agencies with specific guidelines to do four main things: 1) publish government information online; 2) improve the quality of government information; 3) create and institutionalize a culture of open government; and

4) create an enabling policy framework for open government (EOP Memo No. M-10-06, 2009).

The Challenge of Complex Governance Systems

Since the emergence of NPM, the growth of open government and transparency has been matched by a corresponding emergence of another theme in public administration: *governance complexity* (Mulgan, 2003; Kettl, 2006). Governance complexity, while not a new concept for performance measurement in government, is becoming more central to public administration research due to the decline of the traditional hierarchical service delivery model of public administration. Today, there is a wide range of non-governmental stakeholders that are involved in the delivery of public services, from citizens and non-profits to third-party contractors and other levels of national or international government (Ansell and Gash, 2008; Bryson, Crosby, and Stone, 2006). Additionally, there is high expectation placed by the public on good services from government, even though much of it is provided directly by private contractors (Moynihan et al., 2011).

The aspect of governance complexity and performance measurement is an important one for open government performance. Both performance measurement and the management of open government programs should be well-matched; otherwise, they cause problems, such as when planned measurements set performance on the wrong track or provide a false sense of security to their creators (Heald, 2006; Hood and Peters, 2004). Another difficulty with performance measurement in complex systems such as open government is that costs and benefits of performance are difficult to measure because they are spread over a long period of time. NPM has tended to focus strongly on visible performance, and as a result it emphasizes quantity over quality (Bouckaert and Peters, 2002). This issue is especially relevant when we look at open government and transparency initiatives. According to analysis by Heald (2006), transparency initiatives are linked by a specific chain of processes and events, with two main processes called

transformation and *linkage*. *Transformation* processes link together inputs and output events, where resources are used to meet program targets. Next, *linkage* processes connect outputs and outcomes that translate results into broader goals. But the latter part of the process is more difficult to measure because of the uncertain variables and complexity of management. The complexity is not limited to the second part; transparency in the earlier stages can sometimes be damaging to efficiency and effectiveness because transparency requires extra resources to meet the aims of public openness during the process (Heald, 2006).

During any stage of the transformation and linkage process described by Heald, in both inputs and outputs, there are implementation performance questions that can be asked, but open government practices do not yet have a comprehensive performance framework to begin formulating suitable performance questions. Another problem impacting open government performance measurement as a result of governance complexity is the problem of *politics*. Accountability in performance is aided by principal-agent structures that include rules and policies of processes and outcomes into contracts, and use of trust-based, relational contracting (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; Broadbent, Dietrich, and Laughlin, 1996; Terry, 1998). But these same principals in open government programs are political leaders with their own interests in adhering to the wishes of political party or their public constituency (Dubnick and Frederickson, 2010). Thus in addition to the complex process of performance inputs and outputs, open government practitioners face the challenge of politics, and the corresponding performance challenge of designing and implementing of initiatives in political environments.

Three Perspectives of Public Administration

The label “open government” has come to embrace a wide range of public services and bureaucratic characteristics so that it has become a deep-seated, albeit nascent and heavily technocratic, reform movement in public administration (Lathrop and Ruma,

2010; Mulgan, 2014). The wide range that is covered means that open government should be evaluated on a multi-criteria basis as we would evaluate any other significant reform program or public policy initiative.

Following public administration theory of classical scholars such as Herbert Kaufman (1969), three core perspectives to public administration can be adapted for the discussion of performance of open government initiatives. The first two, *responsiveness* and *efficiency*, are based on Kaufman's observation of two key, dialectical forces in public administration by the same names, and the third, the *legal-rational* perspective is linked to the familiar concept of "neutral competence", which would have been the more common term for Kaufman and his contemporaries. "Legal-rational" is used in its place here to connote the broader legal structures of authority in public administration regimes. These three perspectives are also broadly analogous to the three approaches of public administration theory as put forward by Rosenbloom (1983). In his influential article, *Public Administration Theory and the Separation of Powers*, Rosenbloom puts forward three core threads of public administration literature that give the discipline its distinctive identity: *managerial*, *political*, and *legal*.

While the three perspectives used in the present paper relate to some of the most cogent theoretical formulations of public administration by scholars such as Herbert Kaufman and David Rosenbloom, these are not the only sources of the perspectives. Indeed, similar typologies that related back to political theories of the democratic separation of powers continue to be developed in current scholarship in many other public administration topics. A more recent formulation is that of Bovens (2007) whose three perspectives on accountability are the *democratic* perspective (enabling "democratically legitimized bodies"), *constitutional* (use of "executive power and privilege"), and *learning* ("desirable societal outcomes") (Bovens, 2007, 465-6).

These typologies are drawn upon in this paper by using three perspectives: *efficiency*, *democratic responsiveness*, and *legal-rational*. They are used to organize the whole range of public services and policies that fall within the scope of open government initiatives, and to provide a conceptual performance framework. In this section, I describe the three

perspectives and discuss how they can be used to strengthen the existing range of theoretical tools used by public administration scholars to evaluate open government performance.

The Efficiency Perspective

The most elementary assessment of efficiency performance is the cost-benefit ratio of program financing, but efficiency performance can be used to measure the many other aspects of program outputs by matching inputs (costs) to desired outputs (benefits). Various efficiency metrics have been proposed by public administration scholars. For example, Andrews and Entwistle (2013) proposed four faces of efficiency in public administration (productive efficiency, allocative efficiency, distributive efficiency, and dynamic efficiency). These efficiency considerations have been proposed to tackle the issue of the full spectrum of efficiency performance across public organizations and can also be used to carry out cost-benefit analyses of open government initiatives.

Rosenbloom (1983) traces the advent of the managerial approach to public administration to Woodrow Wilson (1887), who sought to introduce a business-minded approach to administration that emphasized rational neutrality and efficiency. Later Frederick Taylor (1919) and Luther Gulick (1936) would strengthen this view of performance based on the fulfillment of scientifically determined top-down goals using minimal amounts of administrative resources and energy. Efficiency in government is still as living and powerful a concept in modern public administration as it was in the days of its most famous advocates such as Taylor (Schachter, 2007). Indeed, efficiency is almost universally held by public administration scholars as a vital part of government performance, but that is not to say that it is universally accepted in all areas of public policy and administration endeavor. For example, many scholars have questioned the over-emphasis of efficiency in contemporary government because other public values such as equal access and civil rights may be compromised (Denhardt and Denhardt, 2000; Frederickson, 1996). In some cases, NPM may even create a distraction from

non-mission public values in public agencies, such as upholding freedom of information policies (Piotrowski and Rosenbloom, 2005).

When it comes to open government performance specifically, efficiency performance improvements have frequently focused on the goals of cost usability that could come with digital citizen collaboration, online forums, big data, and other forms of e-governance. There may even be ways that open government information access can be viewed through a market efficiency perspective so that information can be allocated by the same methods used for other public goods in commercial markets (e.g., Galnoor, 1975). However, while there are doubts about using free markets to improve the efficiency of government, efficiency is certainly a value that citizens rank highly (Poister and Henry, 1994; Welch, Hinnant, and Moon, 2005), and which can be improved through open government efforts and transparency. Indeed, open data on government spending, so that citizens can assess the efficiency of open government efforts for themselves, is one of the primary ways that open government performance can be evaluated within this perspective.

The Democratic Responsiveness Perspective

The democratic responsiveness perspective of performance is analogous to Rosenbloom's *politics* approach to public administration. Rosenbloom characterizes it as the natural counterbalance to efficiency, which "stresses representativeness, political responsiveness, and accountability" (p.221). The definition of democratic responsiveness used here is therefore the ability of government policies and processes to reflect the will of the people either directly or channeled via elected representatives and delegated civil servants (Finer, 1941; Stivers, 1994; Vigoda, 2002). Democratic responsiveness recognizes the fundamental expectation that public policies and programs will be expressions of wishes of citizens, elected officials, and members of civil society. Ensuring responsive performance can often be costly because it takes time and careful consideration to include stakeholders. However, democratic responsiveness can also improve efficiency ratings in

both the short-term and the long-term. West (2004) found that e-governance participation can improve perceptions of government efficiency and responsiveness even if it does not improve public service delivery. The responsiveness perspective provides a lens for analyzing the performance of points of accountability and lines of responsiveness in open government efforts.

Democratic responsiveness cuts across performance in many different ways. Antecedents of the very *usage* of performance information have been found to be related to organizational responsiveness such as organizational culture, leadership, and administrative flexibility (Moynihan and Pandey, 2010). Successful private-public partnerships also depend on responsiveness of government contracting agencies so that they enculturate a process of co-creating managerial social capital and building trust (Alam, Kabir, and Chaudhri, 2014). Other scholars such as Rathgeb Smith (2010) have argued that contracting agencies should pay more attention to the contribution of citizen participation in performance, especially for non-profit contractors, because third parties themselves have a duty to be responsive to the input of their stakeholders.

All public agencies face a struggle to achieve a good reputation with the public, and this makes an impact on their performance in terms of responsiveness (Krause and Douglas, 2005). A key locus of the responsiveness-performance relationship is the positive performance evaluations that come with improvement of public trust (Wang, 2002). Similarly, satisfaction of citizens improves when they feel they have real input in public participation initiatives (Halvorsen, 2003; Kim and Lee, 2012). However, other studies have also observed that performance precedes public trust rather than vice-versa so it is important for open government to perform well on other indicators first before it can gain the public trust (Vigoda and Yuval, 2003).

In recent decades, NPM and managing for results (MFR) has aimed to improve performance of bureaucratic responsiveness and accountability (Moynihan and Ingraham, 2003), though other theorists have claimed that it may be precisely the raft of public administration reforms of NPM, such as outsourcing, bringing third-party government to

bear, that has led the US government to become *less* responsive to public will (Heinrich, Lynn Jr. and Milward, 2009). However, even more recently, perhaps conterminously with open government initiatives and their emphasis on using information and communications technology (ICT) to improve public participation in government, responsiveness as collaboration is becoming more important in public administration (Vigoda, 2002). Other scholars have observed cyclical waves of democratic responsiveness in public administration. According to Frederickson, Johnson, and Wood (2004) governments tend to follow an s-curve of innovation, reflecting a vacillation between administrative effectiveness and representativeness. The ICT aspects of open government are the principal vehicle of attempts to bolster democratic responsiveness in public organizations today. Many reports of the use of technology for open government and transparency are positive, but a large proportion is also unrealistically utopian (Chen, 2013; Vissers and Stolle, 2014). Overall, e-governance practice of responsiveness and accountability is not being widely practiced despite extensive use of new e-governance initiatives (West, 2004; Justice, Melitski, and Smith 2006), and this is despite the fact that there is good evidence that e-government can improve accountability and transparency (Ahn and Bretschneider, 2011), thereby improving performance of democratic responsiveness.

When it comes to open government, advocates are frequently at pains to respond to claims that open government *qua* transparency may do nothing to advance another key value of open government: accountability (e.g., Yu & Robinson, 2012). The problem of reconciling the values of transparency and accountability in open government is a very difficult one, but several possible mechanisms have been proposed by scholars. Four have been put forward by Van Zyl (2014) who researched the ways that civil society organizations can work to help translate government transparency into accountability. The four ways are 1) accessing, interpreting, and distributing information; 2) demanding accountability of government directly; 3) supporting and encouraging formal oversight actors; and 4) supporting and encouraging other actors to demand accountability (Van Zyl, 2014). A similar assessment tool for accountability has been proposed by Bovens, Schillemans, and Hart (2010) who present threefold criteria for assessing accountability

and responsiveness through a democratic perspective, a constitutional perspective, and a learning perspective. Democratic responsiveness, like the related concept of *accountability*, requires a system of behavioral checks or consequences in terms of blame or punishment that hold individuals to account (Bovens, 2007; Mulgan, 2000). The criteria combine tools of accountable governance that are designed to help scholars and public administrators to understand how testing "democratic chains of delegation", exposing specific events of accountability deficit, and measuring improvements in program delivery can foster better performance.

The Legal-rational Perspective

The legal-rational perspective of performance is analogous to Rosenbloom's legal approach, which, he says, has historically been a less prominent approach to public administration theory. The same applies to the legal-rational perspective of performance being described in this paper. Rosenbloom (1983) says that the legal approach is the way that an agency official fulfills and adheres to his/her mandate as defined by legal authorities, either in Congress, agency rule-making, constitutional law, or public law. The legal approach has three core values: procedural due process, substantive civic rights as enshrined in the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth Amendment, and equity as equal protection before the law.

Due to a preponderant focus in public administration literature on pairing bureaucratic goals with legislative goals, there is a bias towards conceiving legal performance exclusively in terms of the authority laid down by Congress (Moe, 1997). However, by labelling the perspective "legal-rational", this paper broadens the approach of Rosenbloom quite considerably by including not just the performance of public organizations in so far as they fulfill judicial, legislative, and constitutional laws, but also in so far as they fulfill any kind of authoritative law, plan, rule, goal, or policy in a way that represents a rational interpretation and execution of that source of authority. The legal-rational perspective is thus a characteristic of government performance as Max

Weber (1922/1978) would have conceived it: a bureaucratic function, with bureaucrats seeking well-defined goals according to the intent of the goal setter, and which reflects an organizational setting that is in this sense *rational*.

In more modern formulations of rational bureaucracy, the work of John Rohr (1989) could be defined as elaborating the theory of the legal-rational perspective. Open government, or transparency, can be seen as a regime value, in John Rohr's terminology, in that it provides an authoritative basis for ethical norms, is reflected in the regime's laws, and guides the behavior of bureaucrats in fulfilling the laws (Piotrowski, 2014). We can also see the relevance of the legal-rational approach to performance in the goal-setting and leadership literature in public administration in, for example, the importance of public employees' public service motivation (PSM) in achieving organizational goals, and in the importance of mission valence to overall performance (Caillier, 2014). Goal-setting ambiguity and clarity in the legal-rational perspective relates to open government initiatives in an identical fashion to other government program and policy areas. However, as discussed above, performance measurement in complex governance systems is a problem that is particularly salient for open government programs where reputational currency can be put at risk through public exposure resulting directly from transparency initiatives. The OGP independent reporting mechanism (IRM) incorporates performance measures designed to assess the way that open government goals have been conceived to encourage the likelihood of successful implementation, such as reporting the level of *specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, and time-bound* (SMART) values of the goals.

The Performance of Open Government

Certain catch-all words like transparency, governance, and accountability have been described as "magic concepts" that can be easily abused because of their generality and the attractiveness of their perceived benefits for public administration (Pollitt and Hupe, 2011, 641). In contrast, performance measurement of open government programs is one

way of providing detailed information on the specific conditions under which transparency can deliver results, but scholars have noted that it is very difficult to measure transparency across time and place because of the multifarious factors that can intervene in programs precisely because they are transparent (Heald, 2006). This aspect of transparency means that it will become increasingly necessary to establish common typologies of open government initiatives that allow the initiatives to be analyzed according to their distinct organizational, technological, and policy differences.

The performance framework will be constructed through the analysis of scholarly findings in four main areas of open government initiative. The areas are: 1) budget transparency, 2) citizen engagement, 3) open government data, and 4) freedom of information. The four categories are based on the main areas of open government topics discussed in *Open Government: Collaboration, Transparency, and Participation in Practice* by Lathrop and Ruma (2010), and have been consolidated in open government practice by the performance evaluation framework used by the OGP (OGP, 2013). The categorization is based primarily on the United States context, and on the US National Action Plan implemented through its participation in the OGP, which is the country's most comprehensive single effort at open government reforms to date. However, the typology goes further than the particular instance of the US OGP because it attempts to synthesize the extant academic literature on the topics in a way that reflects the most comprehensive research on open government and transparency on a global scale. Some open government initiatives such as participatory budgeting combine elements of both budget transparency and citizen engagement. While areas of overlap in the policy areas are inevitable, the selected categorization has been designed to cover a limited set of categories with relevance to a broad range of open government topics. Summarizing the empirical research on the categories, the discussion aims to detail the goals of the open government policies and programs and to consider ways of evaluating performance through the lens of the three perspectives: efficiency, democratic responsiveness, and legal-rational process. The perspectives are the primary lenses through which public administrators can view the performance of open government. By using the perspectives

to assess the four main areas of open government policy, this study provides a practical step in linking a performance framework to the main areas of current open government initiatives.

Performance Area 1: Budget Transparency

Budget transparency has been the most frequent form of government transparency used by public organizations at both national and local levels. Citizens demand spending transparency to know where their tax expenditures are going. Furthermore, the transition to online budget transparency by governments where all accounting statements are publicly available is a natural next step for governments to make because many governments (such as in the United States) are required by law to make such statements freely available. However, today ICT tools give governments the prospect of improving their spending performance both in terms of its efficiency and its democratic responsiveness. Participatory budgeting has been used with success across Latin America (Heller, 2001), and in some US cities such as New York it has been used for marginal areas of the budget (Pinnington, Lerner, & Schugurensky, 2009). Web-based citizen participation can be a low-cost way of improving input in a process that is inherently difficult to democratize, such as the appropriate levels of tax expenditure (Robbins, Simonsen, & Feldman, 2008).

Even so, spending transparency also goes beyond providing open information or participation in budgetary decision-making. It also includes improvements that are made to the quality or organization of public information regarding accounting of public money, even at the other ends of the accounting process such as the subsidies paid to private companies or the donations made to political campaigns. The elaborateness of public finances is another feature of the issue of complex government. But some open government initiatives are making progress in sorting through the complexity. The Croatian government, for example, uses detailed reporting on political campaigns and contributions and stores historical data in an open access digital database so that the

public can see masses of useful information about political activity as well as create a clearer picture of what this means for society by placing the data in the context of historical data (OGP, 2013). This kind of transparency has been shown in empirical studies to improve trust of government (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014). Such trust could have numerous benefits for open government performance such as increasing participation of citizens to improve efficiency, responsiveness, and the legal-rational clarity of other important goals for public agencies.

Benito and Bastida (2009) found that financial transparency can have a knock-on effect on other positive administrative and political behaviors in society such as electoral voting and government fiscal balances. Proactive forms of transparency that provide information to taxpayers and decision-makers can lead to better decision-making with more accurate forecasting of taxpayer preferences (Robbins, Simonson, & Feldman, 2008). Other important areas are the relationship between budget transparency and key performance indicators such as debt (Alesina & Perotti, 1999), where the perspective of efficiency should have strong relevance. Debt information is also one of the most visible ways that spending (mal-)performance can be assessed and repercussions meted out to responsible politicians (Goodin, 1982; Nicholson-Crotty, 2004; Swiss, 2005).

Performance Area 2: Citizen Engagement

Open government's most visible efforts for democratic responsiveness are in the area of citizen engagement and citizen participation in policy and public service innovation. Nevertheless, this perspective is in tension with both the other perspectives, especially efficiency, because citizen engagement programs can be costly for time and resources. The range of competing interests represented by civil society groups also adds to the problem of complex governance. Nalbandian (2005) discusses in depth the difficulty of balancing government modernization with citizen engagement expectations because modernization typically brings ICT tools that enable fast delivery with relatively limited human involvement. For Nalbandian (2005, 312-3), government modernization includes

processes such as “connecting administrative processes to strategic goals,” “integrating personnel and financial systems,” and utilizing “information system- or global positioning system-related activities and Internet based innovations.” Meanwhile, civic engagement and citizen participation involve “recognizing neighborhoods as the base unit of the community,” “engaging citizens in administrative processes,” and “partnerships with other nongovernmental sectors—private sector, nonprofit sector, faith-based organizations—as a way of creating a social fabric.” It can be seen at face value that these interests conflict significantly.

When it comes to more advanced ICT-based forms of citizen participation and innovation, the performance measurement becomes more technical, although it still focuses on responsiveness. Social media adoption for citizen participation is driven by three factors: peer best practice, passive observation of best practice in public and private sector, and market-driven competition incentives (Mergel, 2013). It leads to three strategies by government in using social media: representation, engagement, and networking (Mergel, 2013). But open government initiatives using social media should progress through phases in order to be truly participative for citizens: initial conditions, data transparency, open participation, open collaboration, and ubiquitous engagement (Lee & Kwak, 2012).

The transition between transparency and collaboration is proving to be the biggest stumbling block for government websites. The US website *We the People* (<http://petitions.whitehouse.gov>) has come under criticism for generating frivolous postings, and at other times providing no legitimate path of accountability that will help turn citizen participation into policy change (Dumas et al., forthcoming). However, other participation websites from national governments have seen more effective performance by making the sites more politically appealing. LAPOR (<http://lapor.go.id>) is a website in Indonesia for public feedback specifically for the contentious political issue of the current president’s reform initiatives. During busy seasons it generated as many as 6,000 posts per day (OGP, 2013). Another example from Chile achieved a similar critical mass of support by coupling the online effort with offline services that could be used by the less

technology savvy citizens. E-government services in Chile have a network of one-stop information offices with both a real and an online presence across the country called ChileAtiende (OGP, 2013).

Performance Area 3: Open Government Data

Delivery of open government data comes with several important theoretical and empirical questions about their advantages and disadvantages (Ubaldi, 2013). There are questions concerning the relationship between open data and other important aspects of transparency such as freedom of information (Janssen, 2011) as well as other well-known pitfalls of open data (Robinson et al., 2009). Open data must balance the conflicting needs of transparency and privacy, by “seeking to make the two commitments consistent or even mutually reinforcing; mitigating the tensions with safeguards such as detailed guidelines; allowing privacy to take precedence over integration; and allowing data sharing to take precedence over privacy” (Bellamy and Raab, 2005, 393).

The processes needed to turn open data into better performance are complex (Dawes and Helbig, 2010), but a large part of success comes down to the accessibility of the format and the social and political relevance of the data being provided. In Israel, the technology company Google teamed up with the government data portal data.gov.il to create the country’s first Google Transit website with information on all the transit stops and transportation stations in the country (OGP, 2013). Without this effort to turn the data into something useful, open data can suffer from irrelevance, meaning that citizens and the government are unsure what to do with the information. Meanwhile, valuable government resources have been wasted, and performance in all three perspectives is affected. Unclear purpose harms legal-rational performance; the waste of resources used to maintain the portals leads to inefficiency; and the lack of use by the public means that government responsiveness will also be poor.

The role of private companies such as Google in open government data initiatives shows that importance of technical and financial support from industry in public–private partnerships. However, this is an area of open government that is fraught with complex governance performance complications. Aaronson (2011) evaluated the success of an international transparency initiative, the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) and found that the three collaborators, government, civil society, and business had often radically different ideas of the goals of the partnership, meaning that the legal-rational authority of the agreement was constantly undermining the achievement of the organization’s goals. Another problem with both legal-rational and government responsiveness performance regarding the EITI is that several countries suffered from missing partners at the table, notably civil society or the government legislatures from specific countries (Aaronson, 2011). This latter fact meant that accountability from the public was missing, and thus the overall aim of curbing corruption is not being achieved as well as it should.

Performance Area 4: Freedom of Information

Freedom of information is one of the most strongly established pillars of open government, and international open government initiatives such as the OGP require that countries have freedom of information laws in place before they can become a member of the partnership. But the performance of information access systems is in practice vulnerable to many legal, political, and organizational factors that can turn even a strong law of information access into a weak demonstration of open government. For example, freedom of information policies can be managed by governments so that they restrict access to a limited range of manageable stakeholders rather than riskier stakeholders such as journalists and opposition political parties (Roberts, 2005). Furthermore, decisions such as whether information access is centralized or decentralized can radically affect the control and flow of information (Roberts, 2005; Worthy, 2010). Vital aspects of laws such as proactive disclosure are frequently abused because there is no clear performance target to measure goal attainment, and so officials err on the side of withholding

information (Janssen, 2011; Roberts, 2010). National defense can also be used to preemptively trump the expectation that information will be freely available to members of the public (Roberts, 2003).

In the United States there is a whole host of freedom of information laws including Sunshine laws, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and the First Amendment that provide the legal basis for how FOIA should work (Piotrowski, 2008). But the way that freedom of information is implemented is critical to its performance (Neuman and Calland, 2007; Piotrowski et al., 2009). The drafting and implementation of freedom of information laws can be done in a multi-stakeholder fashion or in an exclusive government clique. Similarly, the system in place to respond to information requests can be centralized or decentralized; segmented according to policy area or unified (Neuman and Calland, 2007).

However, these risks related to the performance of freedom of information policies tend to be eclipsed by concerns that the policies are not being adhered to for open government in the way that they were meant. In the US context, government agencies have shown signs of failing to prioritize freedom of information commitments in their annual performance planning (Piotrowski and Rosenbloom, 2005), and the agencies often face paralyzing trade-offs in the prioritization of transparency and efficiency because of the resource costs required to fulfill a large number of requests (Hazell, 1989).

Table 1. Performance Questions by Public Administration Perspective and Open Government Type

Open government type	Public administration perspective		
	Efficiency	Responsiveness	Legal-rational
Budget transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the costs of maintenance of websites less than the cost of no website to all the stakeholders? Do the gains to spending effectiveness outweigh the long term costs of maintenance and improvement? Does the portal show all available data or does it have omissions that will create extra search costs for users? Is there duplication across the system? Is the data standardized across the system or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the choice of data reflect the input of a broad coalition? Are there mechanisms for public feedback and complaints? Are there mechanisms for official responses to the public? Is the presentation of the information accessible and useful to a broad range of stakeholders? Does the choice of information represent a process that is fair and equal? Are there proactive methods being made to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there an evaluation according to a publicly available statement of purpose and goals? Is the goal specific and measurable? Is there a basis in law, rules, and/or organizational norms? Is there a supportive administrative structure? Does the program have cooperation from all relevant spending parties? Does the program have a formal means to bring officials to account?

	<p>will other levels of government need to adjust?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there sensitive data that will potentially create new political or administrative costs when known? 	<p>raise awareness and education of the public?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an element of offline public participation in the program? 	
	<p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-benefit analysis of budget transparency tools • Annual dollar savings compared to non-transparent budgets • Citizen views of value for money in budget allocation 	<p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity and quality of stakeholder contributions to budget decisions • Quantity and quality of government written responses to citizens • Citizen views of their level of investment in budget decisions 	<p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity and quality of laws, rules, and policies on budget transparency • Number of inputs and outputs defined in budget transparency goals • Citizen views of the relevance and comprehensibility of established rules on budget transparency
Citizen engagement and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the costs of maintenance of forums less than the cost of no website to all the stakeholders? • Do the gains to democracy and innovation effectiveness outweigh the long term costs of maintenance and improvement? • Do the benefits to policymaking of participation outweigh the costs? • Does the program divert resources or investment from alternative, effective forms of engagement and innovation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the program fit together with traditional authorities and processes? • Does the choice of forum represent a process that is fair and equal? • Is the design of the forum accessible and technically robust? • Is the policy and government level of the forum matched by the appropriate level of government program and personnel? • Is there a formal, transparent process for democratic decision-making? • Is the process of setting up the forum itself amenable to public participation and innovation? • Is there a publically available timeline of events and reporting of results of the forum? • Is the forum able to create new coalitions of interest groups and players who have real power? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an evaluation according to a publicly available statement of purpose and goals? • Is the goal specific and measurable? • Is there a basis in law, rules, and or organizational norms? • Is there a supportive administrative structure? • Is the forum run according to a formal constitution or protocol? • Does the forum have a process for translating results into new policies or legislation? • Does the forum lead to new political coalitions, leaders, and advocacy groups that shape the future policy ecosystem?
	<p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-benefit analysis of citizen engagement tools • Amount of time spent engaging citizens compared to non-citizen engagement approach • Citizen views on the value for money resulting from policy or service changes 	<p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity and quality of citizen participation • Quantity and quality of government written responses to citizens • Quantity and quality of policy or innovation outputs • Citizen views of their level and quality of participation 	<p>Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity and quality of laws, rules, and policies on citizen engagement • Number of inputs and outputs defined in citizen engagement and innovation goals • Citizen views of the relevance and comprehensibility of established rules on citizen engagement
Open government data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are the costs of maintenance of the databases less than the cost of no database to all the stakeholders? • Do the gains to policy effectiveness and citizen decision-making outweigh the long term costs of maintenance and improvement? • Are the costs involved with making the data usable and interesting worthwhile? • Does the database show all available data or does it have omissions that will create extra search costs for users? • Does the database hide information that is important for efficiency? • Is there duplication across the system? • Is the data standardized across the system or will other levels of government need to adjust? • Is there sensitive data that will potentially create new political or administrative costs when known? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the choice of data reflect the input of a broad coalition? • Are there mechanisms for public feedback and complaints? • Are there mechanisms for official responses to the public? • Is the presentation of the information accessible and useful to a broad range of stakeholders? • Does the choice of information represent a process that is fair and equal? • Are there proactive methods being made to raise awareness and education the public? • Does the database protect privacy of information? • Are all the commercial benefits of the data being realized for the public or are large organizations and corporations benefiting most? • Is there a transparent and timely process for declassifying sensitive government information? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an evaluation according to a publicly available statement of purpose and goals? • Is the goal specific and measurable? • Is there a basis in law, rules, and or organizational norms? • Is there a supportive administrative structure? • Does the data adhere to laws regarding data privacy? • Are there policies in place to encourage responsible journalistic use of data?

Ingrams, Assessing Open Government Performance through Three Public Administration Perspectives: Efficiency, Democratic Responsiveness, and Legal-rational Process

	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Indicators</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-benefit analysis of open data tools • Citizen views on the value for money resulting from policy or service changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity and quality of citizen contribution in building open data • Quantity and quality of government responses to citizen request for data • Citizen views of their level and quality of participation in open data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity and quality of laws, rules, and policies on open data • Number of inputs and outputs defined in open data goals • Citizen views of the relevance and comprehensibility of established rules on open data
Freedom of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the cost of fulfilling freedom of information requests unreasonable for the government agency? • Is the cost-sharing by the requester set at a reasonable level? • Is the requested material being placed in a public repository to avoid the cost of future requests and retrievals? • Are costs being shared across government rather than falling disproportionately on a small number of agencies? • Is there duplication across the system? • Is the data standardized across the system or will other levels of government need to adjust? • Are the costs of protecting classified information from freedom of information requests worthwhile? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a process for holding agencies and officials accountable for poor performance or misconduct revealed through freedom of information requests? • Is there a process for reporting on request activity and presenting it in accessible and user-friendly formats? • Is there an authority responsible for adapting guidelines on updating government information repositories in response to freedom of information demands? • Is there an independent watchdog or regulatory authority that ensures simplicity and effectiveness of requesting processes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an evaluation according to a publicly available statement of purpose and goals? • Is the goal specific and measurable? • Is there a basis in law, rules, and or organizational norms? • Is there a supportive administrative structure? • Are agencies required to report on their performance in freedom of information actions?
	<p><i>Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-benefit analysis of freedom of information request tools • Costs of open access tools versus freedom of information request tools • Citizen views on the value for money policy or service changes resulting from freedom of information requests. 	<p><i>Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity and quality of freedom of information request submissions • Quantity and quality of government responses to information requests • Citizen views of the level and quality of freedom of information requests. 	<p><i>Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quantity and quality of laws, rules, and policies on freedom of information. • Number of inputs and outputs defined in freedom of information goals • Citizen views of the relevance and comprehensibility of established rules on freedom of information

In Table 1, I present the above analysis of the areas of open government initiative within a detailed framework of performance-related questions. These questions are categorized according to the threefold framework of public administration perspectives, and developed from the performance findings of the four open government areas discussed above. The questions can be used to evaluate open government performance in a comprehensive way that runs across the whole range of core public administration perspectives. The framework is also used to generate several indicators that can be adapted for performance instruments used by scholars and practitioners of open government.

The framework clarifies how open government initiatives can be applied and designed to meet the criteria of the three perspectives. I expand the framework below with some examples of how this application can be achieved according to each of the perspectives, and discuss them with reference to the questions in the table.

Efficiency

Across all the types of open government initiative, efficiency involves balancing costs and benefits and describing the time schedule of project finances and resources. The perspective is technical in nature and requires systematic thinking to achieve a smooth-running program that does not create waste. For example, it asks whether a budget transparency system is standardized across agencies and other governmental units, and it also asks whether duplication issues have been resolved. It is important to note that the cost-benefit analyses are not always monetary; initiatives such as citizen participation which revolve around human and intellectual capital must also weigh costs and benefits in terms of the quality of policy making, citizen equality, and citizen satisfaction. Efficiency can be especially sensitive to large political and economic impacts, and so open government initiatives that can lead to unpredictable and costly political events such as changes in citizen behavior resulting from the release of sensitive health, commercial, or economic information need to be factored into efficiency calculations also.

Responsiveness

The value of responsiveness is informed by a robust and sustainable process of public input. It both seeks to be responsive to citizens on specific policies and at specific events, and seeks to establish mechanisms for public feedback. For information that impacts citizens in very important ways such as budgetary and economic information, the initiatives ask questions such as whether the choice of information is fair and equal, and whether there are proactive methods being used to raise awareness so that all members of society have an equal opportunity to contribute. Responsive initiatives have a long-term perspective by using a transparent and publicly known timeline so that citizens can plan how they are going to engage. It is also long-term in the sense that it aims to maintain and improve the level of responsiveness by establishing appropriate authorities such as independent watchdogs or regulatory authorities.

Legal-rational Process

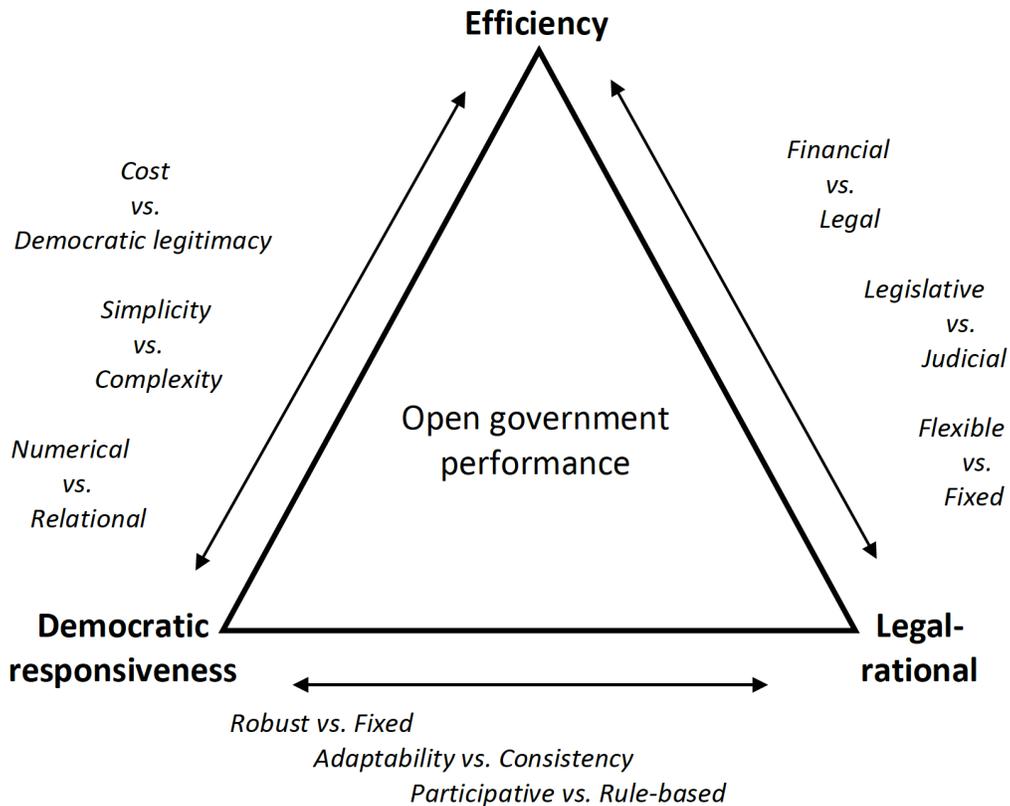
Viewing open government initiatives through the lens of the legal-rational perspectives generally is about designing a supportive environment of legal statutes to define and protect the initiatives. The legal-rational process encompasses the full legal process, from designing laws and principles to enforcing them and bringing violators to account. Attempts to hide public budgetary data or commercial data in the public interest, for example, should be exposed through enforcement mechanisms inherent in the initiative, and the consequences for perpetrators across the spectrum from light (public shame) to severe (criminal prosecution) punishment should be transparent and consistent in their application. Government agencies responsible for programs such as freedom of information may be required to report on their performance in adhering to the legal standards. Furthermore, the question of whether there is a supportive administrative structure refers to the need within the legal-rational lens to employ an administrative structure necessary to maintain the legal process that should be adequately resourced and free of disruptive political interference.

Trade-Offs Between the Three Perspectives

The examples of open government performance as viewed through the lens of the three perspectives may sometimes involve trade-offs when the performance demands of one perspective conflict with the demands of another perspective. The analysis of trade-offs in organizational, political, economic, and social values in public administration are common, and the case is no different for open government perspectives. Important trade-offs have been analyzed at the intersection of individual and organizational goals (Jones, 2003), efficiency and democratic control (Kettl, 2006), and private and public values (Brown, Potoski, and Van Slyke, 2006). Similarly, here trade-offs between specific performance goals result from the performance perspectives outlined above, which are shown in Figure 1. Along with the measurement items and indicators in Table 1, awareness of the areas of trade-off in open government performance is an important tool for public administrators to use in their development of performance instruments for

open government, and such instruments can assign weighted values to the perspectives in order to determine any necessary compromises that will need to be made as a result of the trade-offs.

Figure 1. Trade-Offs in the Three Perspectives of Open Government Performance



Based on the above analysis of the ways that the four areas of open government are considered by the three public administration performance perspectives, nine potential trade-offs are apparent. The efficiency perspective is concerned with cost and objective calculations with numbers while, in contrast, the democratic responsiveness perspective conflicts with performance goals such as democratic legitimacy. In contrast to the efficiency perspective, democratic responsiveness therefore is more concerned with performance that is complex in terms of human behavior and values, and performs in a *relational* way, analogous to the trade-off between private and public values (e.g., Brown, Potoski, and Van Slyke, 2006; Bruijn and Dicke, 2006). For the trade-off of efficiency

and legal-rational performance, the flexible, legislative-based domain of governmental finances of the efficiency perspective conflicts with the fixed, legal domain of the legal-rational process. This is equivalent to the trade-off discussed in previous public administration literature between the values of managerial discretion and bureaucratic control (e.g., Christensen and Lægreid, 2007; Peters and Pierre, 1998; Stoker, 2006). Finally, the trade-off between democratic responsiveness and legal-rational concerns centers around the adaptive, flexible, and participative values of the former and the fixed consistency of rule-based values of the latter, which is broadly similar to the trade-off between autonomous and rule-based management in organizational theory (Klijn, Koppenjan, and Termeer, 1995; Agranoff and McGuire, 2003).

Conclusion

Open government initiatives represent an interesting and potentially transformative development in public administration. The analysis of the performance of four categories of open government (budget transparency, civic engagement, open government data, and freedom of information) show that there are many positive benefits to open government, such as public trust, citizen satisfaction, improvements in citizen participation, improvements in policy-making and policy efficiency, and overall improvement of organizational processes. However, there are some problem areas and underlying challenges to assessing performance due to the complexity of governance under open government. By using a threefold typology of public administration perspectives, I suggest that public administration scholars can make strong steps towards understanding the performance of open government within the framework of comprehensive theory. These three perspectives—efficiency, government responsiveness, and legal-rational processes—have a strong foundation in administrative theory and present a balanced way to analyze the successes and failures of open government policies and programs. A list of performance-related questions and indicators organized according to the three perspectives and the four categories of open government was presented. While this list

does not cover the details of all areas of open government initiative, it can address the basic performance metrics that could be used to assess overall performance according to the three perspectives with the four main areas of open government as examples.

Another important part of the performance measurement process that is not addressed by this paper is the formulation of specific measurement instruments. Performance measurement instruments can draw upon a range of different input and output indicators, as shown in Table 1, to assess the level of open government performance that is being reached according to the three different public administration perspectives. The current study has attempted to provide a conceptual stepping stone towards the development of such measurement instruments, and it is hoped that future work on open government will begin to create such instruments, as there are very few existing precedents in the scholarly literature. The technical similarity of e-government initiatives provides a good place of departure, and performance measurement instruments such as West (2004) and Melitski et al. (2005) may offer suitable models. West (2004) in particular provides a comprehensive and long-term perspective on performance which takes into account the interrelationship of economic and political factors with citizen trust and satisfaction. Long-term perspectives of open government performance are equally important because they concern structural processes that may take many years to develop.

Other scholars have made significant steps forward in developing our knowledge of how ICT can improve the openness of government. This paper contributes to the literature by placing evaluation of open government performance within the framework of broader performance measurement theory. These theories of effectiveness, responsiveness, and legal-rational process not only can assist public administration scholarship by explaining recent developments in digital democracy in terms of core public administration constructs, but they can clarify the criteria by which open government initiatives can be measured amidst increasing complexity of government. The model of the trade-offs between the perspectives provides further motivation to scholars to explore the contexts that favor one perspective more strongly than others, and the performance implications of such trade-offs. Indeed, if there is a balance to be found

among the different perspectives then the trade-offs mark a useful starting point for scholars to understand the values and goals that are at stake, and how the trade-offs may impact long-term process and output performance.

While performance measurement has been credited with the ability to raise performance through accountability (Halachmi, 2002; Moynihan and Ingraham, 2003; Yang and Holzer, 2006), this study does not address the factors that lead to higher open government performance. Further research is needed to assess the causal factors involved in improving such performance. The study is also limited as it does not address the full range of initiatives that are covered by the broad category of open government. Other initiatives such as trade transparency, government security surveillance, and government records management are likewise important in open government, and these areas could be explicated further in future research using the framework introduced here. Finally, as open government initiatives become more widespread in national governments, such performance systems can evolve into empirically tested formulae that represent learning from best practices in open government programs. However, such a goal does require that public administration scholars develop more research on open government programs and make conclusions that draw on our knowledge of performance measurement to this interesting and emerging new area.

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