

2 PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter, we give readers an in-depth insight into the open government movement.¹ We describe where it comes from, what is meant by *open*, how the movement configures alongside other public sector reform movements in terms of its goals and principal supporters, and what chances it has of changing the public sector for the better.

Government is the political apparatus given authority to govern a defined area or community of people. Like any public sector reform movement, open government seeks to change the way government works in terms of the inputs, processes, and outputs that structure government activity, focusing on two components of government organization—information management and public interaction among actors. This is a two-fold approach to public sector organization that emphasizes information *out* and participation *in*. Processes for publishing, information sharing, and digital platforms for public data go *out* into the public sphere, while feedback from a broad range of public actors, such as citizens and the private sector, comes *in* to internal decision-making systems. Meijer, Curtin, and Hillebrandt (2012) have called these two components of open government *vision* and *voice* to capture the relational character between government organizations internally and the public externally. In other words, the public not only obtains a greater vision about what government does but also gains more voice as opportunities to influence government increase.

While vision and voice capture the essential normative orientations of open government, in policy terms, the open government movement supports

a range of different types of policies and programs. While these policies and programs have slowly taken shape and consolidated into the open government movement in the twenty-first century, the normative components of open government and the idea of openness in government itself are much older and draw from the rich soil of public administration theory.

In this chapter, we will uncover the origins of the idea of open government and analyze its development and potential future trajectories—ranging from a short-lived fad to far-reaching systemic change. We will trace the roots of the open government reform approach—both in scholarly paradigms and in their realization in specific policies and programs—and try to gauge what we are dealing with: a reform movement with inherent flaws, a government transformation, or something somewhere in between. In order to do this, we will situate open government in an analysis of prior public management reform trends and their related public administration theoretical paradigms. By analyzing the origins of the open government movement, its key ideas and actors, and its place among other competing models of reform, we will develop several propositions as to the future of open government public management reform. We pay particular attention to one of the most significant reform movements of the twentieth century, New Public Management, which preceded and triggered the contemporary search for new models of reform. While open government is part of this post–New Public Management search, it has essential characteristics of its own.

THE ROOTS OF THE OPEN GOVERNMENT MOVEMENT

The open government movement is a label given to a set of actors who seek changes to the way the public sector operates. However, the ideas and beliefs that characterize the movement are much older than the explicit open government movement itself. In this section, we trace clear precedents in philosophical and political history going back to the time of the Enlightenment that have influenced the open government movement of today.

The Enlightenment

While open government as a reform movement with a specific set of policy ambitions emerged in the twenty-first century, the roots of open

government lie much earlier in Western political philosophy, notably in the scientific principles of rationalism and social egalitarianism from the Enlightenment and the liberalism of eighteenth-century moral and political philosophers.

Open government has beginnings in the writings of Enlightenment philosophers such as Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), who gave human reason, empirical inquiry, and the notion of the natural state of human equality greater prominence in the leading social and political circles of Europe. The growing influence and wealth of mercantile classes and the idea of making public information available for self-governing citizens found a natural home in the rationalism of the Enlightenment.

After the Enlightenment period, European and North American countries recognized these public information principles by enshrining them in laws. Sweden passed the world's first freedom of information law in 1766. In 1775 and 1789, the United States and French revolutions, as well as the United States Constitution, which passed in 1787, gave further political power to republican values of tolerance, religious freedom, and equality. Public agencies started to print internal government information in newspapers and organize information. The publishing of laws and treaties became mandatory, as did the storage of documents in readily accessible ways (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010).

Of course, there is a big difference between these Enlightenment concepts of rationalism, science, and egalitarianism and the promulgation of open government in the modern sense of citizens regularly monitoring political leaders. What makes the Enlightenment important in the history of open government is the belief in democracy and the power of rule by an informed public of citizens rather than unquestioning belief in a monarchy or oligarchy. The earliest freedom of information laws and the new republican constitutions in France and the United States also gave expression to the idea that citizens are sovereign members in a democracy and that the direction of a government is guided ultimately by their beliefs and wishes.

Industrialization and Liberalism

The next stage in the history of open government comes during the industrial era and the emerging welfare state of Western governments. Liberal reformers

at the end of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century continued to campaign for greater equality for citizens, especially for women and the poor. Free market principles and the right of individuals to pursue their economic self-interests went hand-in-hand with these changes. Simultaneously, the emergence of industrial working classes in Europe and North America meant that governments needed to invest further in public education programs. These programs were forerunners of the welfare state and social democratic policies aimed at broadening participation in public life and politics.

The writings of several important intellectuals captured the political and moral philosophies of the liberal age. Principles of open government exist in the theories of Immanuel Kant, who argued for a universal morality of human beings, and Jeremy Bentham, who supported a broader notion of political participation for all individuals because all individuals have the same right to pursue happiness and liberty (Hood, 2007).

In the United States, liberal principles began to apply not just to the political rights of citizens but also internally to the civil service. The Pendleton Civil Service Act of 1883, which aimed to make the civil service a meritocracy, followed the assassination of President Garfield. Garfield's killer was a disgruntled scion of a prominent family who felt unjustly overlooked for a government position. The Pendleton law made competitive examinations for civil service positions mandatory. While the Pendleton reforms restrained elite privilege, moneyed interests were more difficult to control, especially as the power of industrial manufacturing reached unprecedented levels in the United States. Scholar and soon-to-be president Woodrow Wilson, in his article *The Study of Administration*, argued that government needed to be open to public examination to prevent corruption and the abuse of power (Wilson, 1887). And one of the most memorable defenses of transparency from Louis Brandeis in 1914 is encapsulated in the famous phrase, "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants" (Brandeis, 1971, 92).

Bureaucracy and the Modern State

In the twentieth century, the unraveling of colonialism and the arrival of mechanized societies created the modern bureaucratic state. Coupled with

the growth of neoclassical economics and the ideas of philosophers such as Karl Popper (1902–1994), the post–World War II period was marked by Western governments undertaking reforms to widen access to economic and political opportunities. Popper viewed openness as a way to revive democracy and reinforce egalitarian norms that would be a safeguard against social exclusion and elitism in politics (Ingrams, 2020). Governments, then as now, are involved in an ongoing process of designing new policy initiatives for transparency that support the legal-normative authority of the state and liberal democracy. According to public administration scholar David Rosenbloom (2000), administrative laws, such as transparency laws, are a primary vehicle for the process of retrofitting administrative principles and processes to the legal authority of government constitutions.

These administrative principles of the bureaucratic state took the form of public information laws and policies. In the United States, this was achieved by making bureaucracies more rational and open to public scrutiny and democratic influence through laws (e.g., the Administrative Procedure Act of 1946) that regulate recruitment and appointment to the civil service. Government also used public information to create systems of performance measurement (e.g., the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996) and defined the rights and responsibilities of public agencies and citizens for requesting information from the government (e.g., the Freedom of Information Act of 1966).

Increasing political pressure to make government more accessible and transparent emerged as a concept after the Second World War when public information activists challenged the secrecy of military and administrative records, which were growing in size (Yu & Robinson, 2012). Freedom of information acts were an important step in the history of open government. While, as already mentioned, Sweden had forged ahead with such laws in the eighteenth century, other countries increasingly followed. Freedom of information policies were enshrined in many country laws and constitutions in the second half of the twentieth century. Finland led this wave of freedom of information legislating in 1951, but the United States followed in 1966. In the United States, the Watergate scandal, a crisis of presidential privilege and secrecy, drove public outcry against lack of access to government information and led to a strengthening of the Freedom of Information Act. Between

the 1970s and the 1990s, virtually every democratic country passed similar legislation recognizing that strict protocols and legal rules were needed to make sure that public access to government information was a legal right. In subsequent years, the freedom of information movement crossed every continent and found inroads even to nondemocratic or emerging democratic countries (Ingrams, 2018). The global spread of freedom of information laws was a vital plank in the open government movement, as it created a world-wide precedent in the legal apparatus needed for individuals to force their governments to be more responsive.

Human rights advocates increasingly became influential interlocutors in the open government reform movement, and several well-known information rights organizations pushed for reform in countries that did not have laws in place for freedom of expression and freedom of information. Article 19, an international human rights group founded in the UK, campaigned for political action around Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the freedom of opinion and expression. Other organizations founded in a range of Western countries, such as the Centre for Law and Democracy (Canada), the Open Society Institute (United States), and Access Info Europe (Spain), became active in campaigning for greater adoption of freedom of information laws and more proactive uses of open data for transparency and accountability. These organizations were also active in collecting and disseminating quantitative data on the countries' degrees of openness. For example, the Open Society Institute's survey of right to information laws became the Open Government Partnership's indicator for establishing membership eligibility based on a country's access to information legislation.

Mass Media, Democratization, and the Internet

The impact of the internet on the open government movement has been profound and far-reaching. The nature of open government changed once organizational strategies and processes became dominated by the quantity and accessibility of online information (Kassen, 2014). Open government relies on an ecosystem of online-human systems whereby information actors share, receive, interpret, and act on information (Millard, 2015). For this reason, the internet has dramatically altered these information dynamics and put pressure on government information management systems.

A turning point took place in the early 2000s in mass participation on the internet and the adoption of Web 2.0 technologies by individuals and organizations. Major social media platforms were founded. Facebook launched in 2004. The contribution of digital technology activists was vital in turning the efforts of information rights and free speech organizations into a global political movement. Key players included technology entrepreneurs such as Tim O'Reilly; global philanthropic organizations such as the Open Society Foundations (formerly the Open Society Institute) and the Omidyar Network; and policy advisors such as Beth Noveck in the Obama White House and Tim Kelsey in Whitehall under David Cameron.

In the United States, Obama's presidency is seen as the turning point in the fortunes of the open government movement, as the ideas of transparency, accountability, and participation, bound together by the potential of new digital technologies, became a viable political movement at the highest level of the US government. Obama's presidential campaign was explicitly built upon the idea that his administration would be an open style of politics in contrast to the secretiveness of the Bush administration (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010).² Obama's first major policy statement as president was the Open Government Directive, an executive order to the heads of US federal agencies to begin proactively opening their internal information, to include the public's views more in decision making, and to harness the participative potential of new digital technologies. One of the first national open data portals, data.gov, was launched in 2009, and the Open Government Partnership was launched in 2011. For the first time in history, open government as a concept had global political currency for political and organizational reform.

OPEN GOVERNMENT REFORMS IN PRACTICE

Today, the open government movement is characterized by the convergence of four central qualities—transparency, accountability, participation, and technology—which have been encapsulated in the Open Government Partnership core values of *access to information*, *public accountability*, *civic participation*, and *technology and innovation for openness and accountability*. Of note, these four areas differ slightly from the ones presented in Obama's 2009

Open Government Directive. In this book, we rely on the issue emphasis adopted by the Open Government Partnership and the more global version of these agendas—including accountability separately and subsuming collaboration under participation. Having looked at the history of the ideas and policies of open government, these four terms remain very abstract and theoretical, though the movement developed a diverse set of different policy ideas. What do these ideas and practices look like in action?

Open government in practice covers a wide range of policy areas and includes multiple different approaches to organizational change. Within this section, we present three substantive areas of open government—transparency, participation, and accountability—as well as technology, a central supporting element of the open government movement, as we have described above. Table 2.1 presents a handful of examples grouped into these substantive categories.

Transparency Policies

Not only does the concept of transparency have intuitive appeal, but scholars have also long identified it as an important foundation of democracy, sound economics, and good governance. Historically, transparency was most often seen as a political ideal for conditions deemed necessary to give people self-determination. However, as it has developed over time, the concept of transparency has been applied in a wide variety of economic, legal, and managerial settings that emphasize different goals and dimensions and, in turn, have manifested themselves in different policy approaches.

First, transparency makes it difficult for public officials to hide. This political aspect of transparency has benefits for tackling corruption (Cucinello, Porumbescu, & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2017). By equalizing the types of information accessed by actors from different sectors or organizations, transparency also can make decision making more efficient and effective. This communicative aspect of transparency (sometimes called information symmetry) has benefits for encouraging healthier economic markets where competition can flourish (Boone & White, 2015) and for sounder governance.

Second, the concept of transparency has also historically been associated with specific rights-based legal principles. Article 19 of the International

Table 2.1 Examples of open government initiatives	
Type of Policy	Examples
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open data • Beneficial ownership initiatives • Fiscal openness • Freedom of information/access to information laws • Foreign aid transparency policies • Transparency around natural resources • Lobbying transparency policies
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen science projects • Consultation or cocreation in policymaking • Crowdsourcing • Nonprofit and private sector engagement • Open education • Participatory budgeting • Smart cities • Open regulations
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticorruption laws and regulations • Anticorruption agencies or courts • Electoral reforms • Media capacity-building • Public reporting tools • Whistleblower legislation and procedures • Open public procurement policies • Public-private contracting regulations
Technology	<p>All of the above policies can qualify as technology policies insofar as they use technology to achieve their goals. Highly common technologies in open government include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open data platforms • Crowdsourcing • Hackathons • Wikis and application programming interfaces • Citizen reporting apps • E-forums and discussion boards

Convention on Civil and Political Rights enshrines the right of an individual to seek and obtain information. The charter of the United Nations and the European Convention on Human Rights refers to information access as essential to the organization's effectiveness. Principles of transparency also exist in many constitutions and laws in European countries (Curtin & Meijer, 1995).

Third, performance management regimes associated with the rise of New Public Management have used transparency theory to support managerial

effectiveness. In this view, transparency involves the use of performance indicators and focuses on services and the public as consumers. This management approach contrasts with the legal approach, which focuses on sources of policy and administrative decisions and views institutions in terms of deliberation, democracy, and human rights (Clark, 1996).

Fourth, transparency policies such as freedom of information laws are also often part of anticorruption initiatives. Governments adopt these laws with the rationale that strict standards and better enforcement of public access to information are more likely to expose and reduce corruption (Cordis & Warren, 2014). In developing countries, initiatives were undertaken to reinforce existing freedom of information laws to better tackle corruption. Anticorruption initiatives focus on specific areas of public organizations where corruption is likely deterred by data monitoring, such as job descriptions and salaries of public officials (Bowman & Stevens, 2013). For example, when the public can see public salary and job description information, the number of no-show jobs (where individuals are paid for jobs they do not do) is reduced.

Finally, on the other side of the transparency legislation coin are laws designed to protect people's identities and privacy from *too much* transparency (Piotrowski, 2010). These laws aim to protect the right to personal privacy while simultaneously supporting openness (Hardy & Maurushat, 2017; Ingrams, 2017a).

Motivated by these different approaches—either individually or in combination—transparency reforms are today seen as driven by a movement (Birchall, 2011). However, the intuitive value of transparency to government also means that it is subject to numerous competing perspectives and demands. This can also create situations where politicians give external obeisance to the value of transparency rhetorically but have a wide berth for interpreting the implementation of transparency policies in practice. In such situations, transparency can become a “magic concept” that is applied to almost any policy problem (Pollitt & Hupe, 2011), even if inappropriately.

Participation Policies

Open government reforms not only aim to provide access to information but also usually have a participatory dimension—the “voice” component

in Meijer, Curtin, and Hillebrandt's (2012) terminology. However, participation has sometimes received too little attention in open government research (Susha, 2015). Policymakers frequently use public participation—often leveraging information and communication technologies—in order to develop, implement, or evaluate policies (Bingham, Nabatchi, & O'Leary, 2005). Yet voice is not merely an administrative initiative; rather, it can also play political roles involving different levels of political engagement. In some cases, such as participatory budgeting, formal mechanisms give citizen participation a more decisive voice over what happens in government and policymaking, potentially creating a more legitimate allocation of tax funds (Harrison & Sayogo, 2014).

Participation in open government may be of several types. Wijnhoven, Ehrenhard, and Kuhn (2015) suggest four types of participation based on the level of political or administrative involvement by the members of the public and how focused the participation is on producing an innovative policy or idea. (1) *Citizen innovation* is a type of participation that is focused on better administration with innovative goals; (2) *collaborative democracy* is focused on political actions with innovative democratic models as the goal; (3) *citizen sourcing* is highly administrative in focus and is about seeking approval or support for an existing policy rather than innovation; and (4) *constituency support* is highly politically focused and, like citizen sourcing, is focused on garnering support rather than innovating new ideas.

Participation policies also try to leverage the contributions of many different types of actors in society, including ordinary citizens, civil society, private sector organizations, experts, and officials themselves. Examples of these can be seen in the policy area of education. Public education in schools has been an active focus area for public participation initiatives because education is a core public good in society. In elementary and secondary levels of education, educators' roles reach beyond school buildings to the education that takes place after school with parents, friends, or the general community. Policymakers thus try to promote excellence in education by improving collaboration. Education policymakers can use crowdsourcing to generate new ideas for delivering education, validate them through proof of concepts, and improve the implementation of new policies (Aitamurto &

Landemore, 2016; Mergel, 2015). Indeed, many open government theories consider collaboration—the proactive solicitation of citizen input—as a critical component of public participation (Grimmelikhuijsen & Feeney, 2017). But participation can also occur at a more organizational level through engagement with nonprofit or private sector organizations (Gonzalez-Zapata & Heeks, 2015). These organizations fulfill the need for a demand side for open data projects and intermediary organizations; therefore, participation initiatives frequently focus on strengthening these demand-side organizations (Fung, 2013; Ohemeng & Oforu-Adarkwa, 2015; Piscopo, Siebes, & Hardman, 2017). Some popular types of open government technologies, such as those providing visualization, mapping, or information on politics, social benefits, and the digital divide, are especially useful for the nonprofit sector (Kassen, 2014).

Another focus of participation initiatives in e-government is smart city initiatives that integrate digital service streams with smart sensors and devices to improve the predictive capacity of local services in areas such as household energy use or neighborhood garbage collection. Smart cities employ a range of other data tools designed to allow nongovernmental organizations to gather services into city platforms to provide users with easy access to tools such as apps, information aggregators, open data repositories, and service platforms (Zuiderwijk & Janssen, 2014). But here, too, private and nonprofit participation also matters, including data clearinghouses that gather data from different organizations, interpret the data, and enable regulation and delivery of services to be controlled by algorithmically based instructions in a smart system. Smart city ecosystems also often rely on collaboration with business (Abella, Ortiz-de-Urbina-Criado, & De Pablos-Heredero, 2017) and open data management (Zeleti, Ojo, & Curry, 2016).

Accountability Policies

Accountability “involves the means by which public agencies and their workers manage the diverse expectations generated within and outside the organization” (Romzek & Dubnick, 1987, p. 228). In the public sector, accountability can be both a political and a public administration phenomenon. In the political sense, accountability, can be vertical (through elections [Manin, Przeworski, & Stokes, 1999]); horizontal (through official checks

and balances and oversight institutions [O'Donnell, 1998]); or diagonal (through societal voice such as media, activism, and protest). In any form, however, accountability requires not just “answerability” but also “enforcement” (Schedler, 1999) in the form of some formal or informal sanction.

In public administration theory, the concept of public accountability has roots in financial bookkeeping practices whereby civil servants keeping records of public money would render an account of how money was being spent (Bovens, Goodin, & Schillemans, 2014). However, the concept received more attention in the 1980s with the growth of New Public Management (Bovens et al., 2014; Forrer et al., 2010) and is applied today to all areas of government action. Public accountability is both a system of governmental processes and a specific quality or status. It is a process in the sense of being an institutional mechanism of checks and balances and a status in the sense that public organizations or government actors may (or may not) have it but are widely seen as virtuous when they do (Bovens et al., 2014). As a process, by sharing information widely with all stakeholders, open government embeds government in a system of accountability. In the latter sense, the status of openness is equated with the status of being accountable because openness expresses the status of being forthcoming and taking responsibility.

Although accountability is closely linked to transparency (Bovens, 2007; Fox, 2007; Shkabatur, 2012), they may not always be “twins,” as claimed by Hood (2010). Rather, they may mesh well in a governance system as matching parts, or they may only overlap partially and interact in disjointed ways as an awkward couple. While transparency can be sufficient to create a process of accountability, transparency is not necessary for accountability (Fox, 2007). That is, it is possible for accountability to be achieved without transparency, and it is possible to have transparency but no subsequent accountability in terms of consequences or punishments for those who breach the public's trust (Fox, 2007). For example, laws can be applied in an accountable way by delivering legal interpretations that rely on all available evidence and information, even if such evidence and information is not available to the public in general. In fact, the proprietary nature of such evidence is often considered vital for a fair legal process whereby investigators can be protected from adverse media attention and public scrutiny before delivering a verdict.

Although accountability is a more general concept, many specific types of open government policies aim to improve or enable it—often by drawing on elements of transparency, participation, and technology. For example, in addition to freedom of information laws, other areas of transparency that are especially relevant to fighting corruption are public hearings on proposed laws, public procurement and asset transparency, budget transparency, and revenue from natural resources and international aid (Murillo, 2015). Anticorruption policies also increasingly experiment with social media where users share information about internal government operations, thus creating a continual and collective monitoring mechanism of public officials (Stamati, Papadopoulos, & Anagnostopoulos, 2015). Fiscal openness policies have a similar goal—to mitigate corruption—but focus specifically on the problem of conflicts of interests between the assets of government agencies and the interests of citizens. They include asset disclosure laws forcing politicians to make clear what investments they have (Schnell, 2015) and disclosure standards on the divesting of state-owned enterprises (Guedhami & Pittman, 2011). Policy areas that involve lucrative industries, such as fossil fuels, minerals, and environmental impacts of businesses (Rashchupkina, 2015) or contacts with overseas governments (Winters, 2014), are key for fiscal openness policies.

The open government focus on accountability not only draws on many traditional uses of accountability but also has a number of unique features, especially insofar as open government marries accountability with technology. Open government policymakers increasingly try to use technological tools for better public accountability. Accountability in open government policies includes access to budget data, effective control by the legislature, and an effective role for civil society and other accountability advocates and watchdogs (Benito & Bastida, 2009; Piotrowski & Van Ryzin, 2007). Nonprofit and private sector public service providers see data about government spending and performance and adjust their efforts to obtain public sector projects. Openness in public procurement can both allow citizens and civil society organizations to keep a watchful eye on how public money is spent and further reduce information asymmetries between the government and nongovernmental organizations. As a result, the latter can market their products to the public sector more efficiently because they know more

about the value of specific products and services and can understand their competition.

New digital forms of accountability aim to increase interaction between internal and external stakeholders rather than the traditional approach of procedures and rules for bureaucratic reporting (Schillemans, Van Twist, & Van Hommerig, 2013). Online notice and comment policies and spending transparency help accountability (Shkabatur, 2012). Some scholars have also argued that social media can play an important role in public accountability systems, especially as social media encourages outside political influences from civil society or the news media to become increasingly involved in discussing matters of public interest (Borge Bravo & Esteve Del Valle, 2017). Open data initiatives can also facilitate accountability by pooling data from diverse sources and giving a range of organizations permission to reuse the data (Janssen & Estevez, 2013), potentially by organizing and presenting the data in meaningful ways that encourage accountability-relevant goals (Schmidhuber et al., 2017; Weerakkody et al., 2017). For example, finance departments create interactive graphics with their data to demonstrate how funding allocations are being spent (Yavuz & Welch, 2014).

Technology Policies

We have described the three components of open government reforms and described several specific types of policy initiatives that characterize each. However, this picture of open government reform would be incomplete without more discussion of the technology dimensions of the reforms.

Almost all of the aforementioned policies rely on the innovative use of technology in one way or another. In the modern era, a type of technology-aided transparency called computer-mediated transparency emerged (Evans & Campos, 2013; Meijer, 2009; Welch & Wong, 2001). Similarly, Fung, Graham, and Weil (2007) argue that information and communication technology has led to a third wave of transparency policies that they call “targeted transparency” because the policies designed with transparency tools are tailored to achieving accountability with specific outputs or behavioral changes.

Some argue that open government is a similar type of electronic transparency initiative that should be considered an extension of e-government

reforms that started in many governments around the world in the 1990s (e.g., Abu-Shanab, 2015; Hansson, Belkacem, & Ekenberg, 2015). On the other hand, open government initiatives clearly have their genesis in a long history of openness initiatives before the digital technology revolution, so there does not appear to be a strong case to the idea of limiting open government to the e-government sphere—though clearly technology does play an important role.

An important emphasis on technology is seen in many open government policies. Managerial openness in the twenty-first century has rapidly advanced by the application of new information communication technology products and services from the private sector. In the United States, President Bill Clinton's administration viewed technology as a way to improve the openness of government, such as with the creation of the Government Information Locator System (Lewis, 2000). The focus on transparency during the Obama administration was even further driven by applications of new digital technologies, such as social media, wikis, application programming interfaces, and open data (Jaeger & Bertot, 2010; McDermott, 2010).

Open government policies in all areas—transparency, participation, and accountability—could not continue as they are without the internet. The fact that open government has made major inroads on the reform agenda is due in large part to the invention and rapid global adoption of the internet. In fact, technology serves as the unifying agent of transparency, participation, and accountability by facilitating the interactive exchange of information. Technology also facilitates open systems and learning for the development of even more technologies and fosters the global spread of such systems.

However, the technological side of open government has also raised some challenging questions about the efficacy of the open government movement. Technology applied to transparency initiatives can have both positive and negative effects on government openness (Murillo, 2015). For example, while crowdsourcing initiatives can sometimes spur better government innovation (Mergel & Desouza, 2013), crowdsourcing has also often been proven to include only a limited number of participants, meaning that policies produced by crowdsourcing have unequal representation of citizen interests (Liu, 2017). Another negative perspective sees open government as a type of cost-saving corporate style of capitalism driven by technology that allows

more participation by citizens and reduces financial outlays for the government (Catlaw & Sandberg, 2014). Finally, given that public life inevitably becomes more open following the gradual infiltration of digital technology services into all areas of human life, some worry that open government may lead to mass digital surveillance and automated decision making that diminishes the role of reasoned deliberation about public affairs.

In sum, open government approaches to public sector reform are generally characterized by these four major policy components. But are these reforms likely to be successful? The open government movement is not the first time that policymakers have attempted to fundamentally restructure government functions and relationships with society. To answer this question of what to expect from open government reform, we can turn to previous public sector reform attempts and learn from their successes and failures. While the open government movement has rapidly ascended into scholarly and public policy debate, its future is still hotly debated. By revisiting theories about how past public reforms have waxed and waned over time, we can question the positioning of open government among contemporary reform movements and evaluate its likely future prospects.

COMPETING VISIONS OF PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM

As we have seen above, the open government movement has deep roots in longstanding traditions of democratic government. Further, since the spread of the internet as a popular tool for citizens in everyday life, government reform advocates from information rights, citizen participation, and digital democracy perspectives have all contributed toward a collection of public sector reform ideas, policies, and practices known as the open government movement. But open government is not the first type of public sector reform movement, nor is it the only type of reform that has changed the public sector—far from it. If we take a glance back at government institutions from history, we find many instances of powerful reform movements that sought to redesign and revamp existing institutions.

According to one scholar of the history of public management reform, Paul Light (1998), trends in public sector reform come and go like ocean

tides. At one point in time, governments introduce changes to fight perceived inefficiency and waste in government. Then, at another time, they conceive a different purpose for government and instead begin to alter the system around fighting corruption or increasing the scientific rigor of policies. New reform movements arrive and then decline because of changes in dominant political and economic currents (Light, 1998). While there are other theories about public management reforms that do not view reform history as being as cyclical as Light's tidal thesis would have it, most scholars would agree that reforms should be viewed as a cumulative process involving the acts and interests of many actors and organizations. Another influential analysis of reform trends is that they comprise much more unforeseen events that punctuate slow processes of change (Baumgartner & Jones, 1991). But even this view of public sector reforms sees change as long-term and subject to forces that are mostly beyond the conscious control of specific individuals or groups. Government reform is a complex institutional process that is subject to longstanding political, legal, and cultural forces. To a certain extent, these forces constrain what is possible for champions of a new reform vision such as open government.

The structure of public organizations is in a permanent state of flux as government leaders make decisions about what goals and ideals their departments are designed to pursue. Government departments, agencies, and programs change, shifting over periods of routine organizational and political change fostered by electoral processes or, in rarer cases, by nondemocratic means such as violent overthrow. But sometimes when government decision makers change the allocation of resources or personnel in government, it is a result not of everyday turnover or planning but rather of a desire to create more fundamental change by altering the organizational system itself. Such changes can be either internally driven, fostered by external forces, or (more commonly) a combination of both. Such a concerted effort at fundamental change is a key characteristic of public sector reform.

Structural change in public management reform is not just about rearranging the furniture of government departments but also about adopting new tools, laws, processes, and values. It, therefore, involves changes both in structural and normative processes. Structurally, governments are composed

of the physical architecture of organizations in things such as the departments, technologies, and people who make the administration of government. While some degree of change in these structural things is continual and normal, system-wide change aimed at redesigning the physical architecture by adopting new policies and responsibilities is unique to reform. However, in addition to the physical components, governments are also composed of normative systems of values: political ideas and institutional norms and processes. Such public values drive the physical characteristics of reform.

Critically, then, we must look to the dynamics and origins of public values when understanding how large-scale and local-scale factors converge in public sector reform. Public values are the ideals in society that permeate beliefs about how the public sector should be run—who should lead, the types of behaviors expected from leaders, what government's role should be, its ultimate goals, and the kinds of returns or outputs that citizens expect from an investment of public resources. Public values are highly changeable over time and can be hard to fathom, but they are still key to understanding the normative and structural decisions of reform (Charles, de Jong, & Ryan, 2011).

In the next section, we review key reform transitions of the last century, with a particular focus on the relevant public values. We can see in the open government reform movement a similar distinctiveness of values, but we can also trace a path of dependency, or at least similarity, with many of the other reform movements that preceded it. Better understanding these similarities can help us develop better-informed expectations of how open government may develop in the future. Should we understand open government reform as yet another tide driven by the political actors of its time—essentially recycling earlier reform ideas and destined to be soon replaced by a different focus—or as something different?

A Brief History of Modern Reforms

Scholars of public management reforms have been actively involved in the study and evaluation of different reform trends. Scholars now characterize the first phase of modern public administration as the orthodox public administration or alternatively *classical* public administration (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2000; Lynn, 2001). It would be more accurate to call the orthodox public administration the first collection

of scientific theories in Western public administration at the dawn of the twentieth century rather than a reform movement per se. Subsequent reform scholars and government decision makers used orthodox public administration as a base set of assumptions to build upon in subsequent reforms. Orthodox public administration is a Weberian approach to public administration, so named after the sociologist Max Weber. Orthodox public administration favored a machine-like organization of work units designed to process administrative tasks according to legal precepts and a rational division of tasks according to top-down government. Government reforms during the orthodox public administration period were oriented toward the craft of the skilled government administrator and featured having robust and practical skill sets, including counseling, stewardship, diplomacy, and political wisdom (Rhodes, 2016).

At a later point in the twentieth century, there was a shift in the focus of public administration, which emerged primarily in the United States. From approximately the 1950s to the 1970s, public administration thinkers led by Herbert Simon and Dwight Waldo tried to introduce new principles to challenge the orthodox approaches of public administration. Waldo's book *The Administrative State* (2017), first published in 1948, characterized traditional administrative approaches as aimless, unwieldy, and uninteresting, and he was critical of the rigid separation of the political and administrative spheres. While the focus of how to address these problems was different for Simon and Waldo, their work triggered a long-lasting quest for public officials to tackle administrative incompetence that Lynn (2001) called the "myth of the bureaucratic paradigm" and led to intense debate on the merits and failings of public sector reform in the search for the next big thing—a quest for new management styles that could make public organizations perform to their highest potential.

According to Frederickson (1976), what made the New Public Administration distinctive was a scientific shift to managing a slow process of doing government work more effectively that was more optimistic about the role of the state and public administrators. New Public Administration intellectuals put expert bureaucrats, as agents of public values, at the center of the political-administrative system of democratic government and argued that such experts

were essential to delivering not just better government effectiveness but also better outcomes for democratic goals such as equity and fairness.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the quest for better government outcomes took on a distinctive new flavor with the rise of the New Public Management. The approach of the New Public Management was to use concepts derived from free-market economics and public choice theory. These theories suggested that self-interested actors in a free market with limited interference, entrepreneurial managers, and customer orientation could liberate the processes of managing public organizations and result in higher quality and efficiency of service delivery. The UK, under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and the United States, under President Ronald Reagan, were the forerunners of the New Public Management reforms, though the cluster of changes associated with this movement would only be called New Public Management by public administration scholars in the 1990s (Hood, 1991).

But New Public Management policies were not restricted to government administrations on the right of the political spectrum, as the case of the management reforms in Sweden led by social democrats shows (Hood, 1995). New Public Management initiatives were prominent in governments with a range of political orientations in the UK, North America, Scandinavia, Australia, and New Zealand (Osborne, 2010b). Indeed, in the 1990s, the New Public Management approach continued in the United States under a center-left Democratic government. Spurred by the ideas outlined in the influential book *Reinventing Government* by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (1992), Bill Clinton and Al Gore launched a federal-wide system of performance benchmarking in the National Performance Review.

The dominance of the New Public Management model of government reform in many countries around the world gave way to a kind of splintering of public management reforms that continues today. Currently, many new public sector reform movements exist side by side with previous management reforms and are integrated within the overall values and structure of these reforms. Some public management reforms identify with the New Public Management trend, but other efforts do not. Global or regional convergence toward one ideal of management is somewhat of a myth (Lynn, 2006; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). This diversification of New Public Management

defines the most recent phase of public management reform. In this phase, starting from about the year 2000, policymakers increasingly integrated New Public Management types of managerial reform with politically and socially oriented reform in the governance tradition. Thus, in the early 2000s, management became rivaled by another reform perspective focused on the concept of *governance* called the New Public Governance. New Public Governance takes a broader, more fundamental notion of government, its ultimate values, and its ability to sustain change by switching attention to government responsibility and capacity through intergovernmental and multisector partnerships (Cheung, 2005).

According to Park and Joaquin (2012), New Public Governance broadens the range of government values beyond a market efficiency perspective. Furthermore, this breadth requires that problem solving is done in a multisectoral, collaborative way; that is, through governance (see Emerson and Nabatchi, 2015). New Public Governance reform movements aim to address the perceived shortcomings of the New Public Management, such as a narrow focus on market principles and managerial control that has led to a thinning of administrative institutions, the hollowing of the state (Terry, 2005), and an obsession with governmental efficiency (Lynn, 2006; Welch & Wong, 2001).

In some respects, the open government approach straddles both the New Public Management and New Public Governance. On the one hand, open government has the New Public Management theorist's faith in private innovation working for a mutual benefit. On the other hand, open government, like the New Public Governance, also views proactive collaboration between governmental and nongovernmental organizations as critical to contemporary public management.

There are many clear distinctions among these different reform approaches in terms of the key values with which they seek to imbue public organizations. However, there is also substantial diversity within each of these categories. Increasingly, scholars note a splintering of approaches rather than the trends merging, dominating, or amalgamating into some sort of synthesis. According to Lodge and Gill (2011), New Public Management, widely perceived by scholars as on the decline, remains a dominant force in reform approaches. Moreover, Lodge and Gill say that the new reform efforts

themselves are very fragmented. A number of new public sector reform ideas have been jostling for influence, including new public service (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015), digital-era governance (Dunleavy et al., 2006), and the open government reform movement itself (De Blasio & Selva, 2016).

This recent period of fragmentation of public sector reform approaches is thus the milieu in which open government emerges. According to Greve (2015), what is unique about the recent scholarly theories of public sector reform is that new movements are now aiming at being the key *post*-New Public Management reform movement. They tend to draw on the major global impacts of information and communication technology and the power of the internet, with its claims to greater effectiveness, increases in network-like organizational structures, and citizen empowerment. La Porte, Demchak, and de Jong (2002) say that these trends are characterized by several shared common approaches to change, including novel uses of information technology, emphases on longer-term outcomes and broader societal challenges, and structures based on networks and collaboration between and within citizens and government.

One perspective that strives to give greater conceptual unity to these divergent later models of governance—of which open government is a part—is Anders Esmark's (2016) concept of *Late Modern Technocracy*. Historically, argues Esmark, we see common themes in each of the reform trends of modern public administration. Scholars have viewed government reforms as a perennial compromise among three basic governance models: bureaucracy, markets, and networks. However, the important new element that Esmark adds to this mix of three elements is *technology*. Late Modern Technocracy is a light-touch form of governance relying on new technologies, data management to assess performance and determine priorities, and engagement with citizens. In such an approach, the government plays more of a role as a platform provider serving to share information, bring together collaborators, and facilitate the transformation of public resources into economic and social value. The affinities between Esmark's concept of Late Modern Technocracy and open government as a reform movement are clear. Both emphasize La Porte, Demchak, and de Jong's (2002) values of digital government transformation, transparency, and a widening out of government obsession with

economic efficiencies toward social and democratic values. In the next section, we build on these commonalities in order to apply the lessons from past public sector reform movements to better understand open government itself.

THE FATE OF PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

Public management reforms can be analyzed and compared on two dimensions: First are the instrumental aspects, designed by decision makers as specific tools or processes to realize organizational changes. We call these the means of reform. Second are the normative aspects, coming from the value perspectives of reformers with attendant sets of ideas about the goals, norms, and ideals that the reforms aim for. We call these the ends of reform. These two elements can be used to better understand the processes of change that usher in a new reform perspective. But they can also help explain the wane or atrophy of reform perspectives. Instrumental processes in the reform’s means can go wrong, while reform ends can suffer from internal contradictions, lack of integrity, or competition from other ideas about ends.

These challenges to means and ends can be divided into internal and external organizational foci, as shown in figure 2.1. The internal organizational focus concerns what goes on inside the organization, such as managing

		Reform dimension	
		Means	Ends
Organizational focus	Internal	Implementation problems	Goal ambiguity
	External	Structural barriers	Political conflicts

Figure 2.1
Public management reform and associated risks.
Source: Ingrams, Piotrowski, & Berliner (2020).

employees and decision-making processes. The external organizational focus is about what goes on between the organization and its external environment, such as relationships with other organizations and, especially, the politics that result from these relationships.

Hypothetically, reform movements could suffer problems in any one of the four ways. Each way is applied and elaborated below to the specific case of open government. We apply scholarly research on reform to develop evidence of the full set of risks that characterize each of these four problem areas. In each, we consider the ways that these problems may befall the case of open government with its own set of values, logics of change, and relevant sets of public management and international actors.

Implementation Problems

Design-reality gaps

The success of open government reforms is related to the ability of reformers to design and implement changes that reflect the values of the reform. For smooth implementation, the designs of open government need to be internally communicated among organizational members. However, cracks may begin to appear in the structure of reforms if gaps emerge between the original ideas of the policy design and the reality of their implementation. As these gaps widen, the probability increases that reforms will fail (Baier, March, & Saetren, 1986).

In the Open Government Partnership, a large number of open government programs fail to be completed on time or with all the stipulated proposals included. However, even if there are no clear instances of failure, the outputs and outcomes of such reforms may simply be hard to evaluate because aspects are hard to detect and measure. In open government, the level of openness that has been implemented by a government seems to be a particularly difficult thing to quantify. Ambiguous goals that are subjective or workload-oriented, rather than objective- and results-oriented, may especially increase the risks of such failure (Heinrich, 2012). Given the oft-cited characterization of open government goals, such as participation and transparency being subjective and ambiguous (e.g., Yu & Robinson, 2012), the risk of design-reality gaps appear particularly acute for open government reform.

Insufficient resources

Many countries where open government reforms are being implemented lack organizational and human resources capacities, skills, and adequate public infrastructure even to effectively deliver the necessary public goods such as education, public transportation, and defense. Further, open government initiatives follow on from years of New Public Management reforms involving structural readjustment programs that encourage increasing reliance on global economic markets and privatization. These changes can make it difficult to organize new public sector reforms centrally. According to Pollitt & Dan (2011), it has also led to the “hollowing” of state institutions through private sector partnerships, has made cost control difficult, and resulted in highly complex governance structures. Open government reformers in many countries inherit these hollowed-out governance institutions and must seek to implement new openness policies where there are internal challenges, such as reform shortages, that continue to be experienced in the wake of the global credit crunch in 2008.

Cross-country relevance

The setting of any public sector reform is a reflection of the unique characteristics of the local or regional environment. The setting includes characteristics such as the quality of networks between government and other organizations, styles and attitudes of leadership and service, and cultural norms around the idea of change (Cole & Jones, 2005). For this reason, even globally successful reforms such as New Public Management were implemented in a more fragmented or contextually nuanced way than we might expect given the nominal adoption of many governments (Osborne, 2010b). In fact, if we set New Public Management as a benchmark for successful public management reform, then the expectation for open government is still of weak potential to be replicated in different country contexts.

Political influence

Problems of implementation in the public sector inevitably encounter complications in the political environment where there are multiple actors with competing interests. Politics has a profound influence on reform. Open government is a global movement, but every country has a unique type of

balance among politicians, bureaucrats, and civil society that creates politicization (Moon & Ingraham, 1998). Whatever the style or approach of reform that is being adopted, in order to make reforms enduring, reformers require a certain set of skills and strategies. Donald Kettl (2006) says that the “Modernizing Government [movement], like much cutting-edge work in government reform, struggles to deal with the inescapable dilemma: the search for central, driving themes, on the one hand, and the need to recognize the vast variation among nations, on the other” (315).

Long-term effects of politics mean that it is necessary to study the results of reforms over a long period and that determining the degree of success in a reform movement may rely on an analysis of a complex series of long-term consequences (Callander, 2011).

Politics is inevitable in reform, but policymakers also need to control the formal political *process* of reform. A danger of reforms is that they end up serving ideological and political objectives more than the original goal of improved public sector performance (Brewer & Kellough, 2016; Kettl, 2000). Because different political groups in open government may favor one specific side of a values tension over another (for example, efficiency vs. transparency), it makes it highly likely that political influences favoring a particular set of public values will drive the reform agenda (Durant, 2008). Furthermore, if the balance of political groups is strong, reforms may endure a compromise of values that ultimately leads to implementation being unworkable.

Goal Ambiguity

Inherent value ambiguities

The significant characteristics of public sector reforms described earlier conflict on key points. However, research on public management reform has found that a chief determinant of the success or failure of reform is the way it disagrees internally within its own set of values and principles. In other words, reforms can also have internal disagreements or conflicts among reform principles. This tension is inevitable because reforms seek to accomplish multiple things at the same time that may not be able to coexist comfortably or at all. Indeed, governance is an inherently difficult process that involves trying to balance features such as authority and autonomy

that are intrinsically in tension and can undermine managerial effectiveness (Rainey & Jung, 2014).

Several different types of values are in tension in reforms. De Graaf, Huberts, and Smulders (2016) say that there are three governance categories where the attempts to address public values tensions are focused: *proper governance* (integrity, equality, and lawfulness), *performing governance* (effectiveness and efficiency), and *responsive governance* (participation, transparency, legitimacy, and accountability). This divide can be seen clearly in the advocacy camps behind the open government movements. There is a camp focusing on open data, with its attachment to concepts of private innovation and efficiency, and, on the other hand, there is a camp focusing on the democratic function of information, with its attachment to concepts such as participation for supporting public debate and protecting freedom of expression. However, scholars go beyond these two to identify groups of the most central public values. According to Jørgensen and Bozeman (2007), there are as many as eight fundamental values of public governance. Choices must frequently be made among them by reformers, as the values cannot all be maintained simultaneously (Hood, 1991). Jørgensen and Bozeman's eight values are (1) *human dignity*, (2) *sustainability*, (3) *citizen involvement*, (4) *openness*, (5) *secrecy*, (6) *compromise*, (7) *integrity*, and (8) *robustness*. Open government emphasizes at least three of these values (citizen involvement, openness, and integrity) and thus may succumb to problems resulting from the way they conflict with one another.

Interorganizational complexity

As discussed above, tensions among different reform values are, to some degree, inevitable. Reformers must decide how to balance such values. But tensions are not only inherent in the kinds of values chosen by reformers; they are also a product complexity that occurs in modern styles of governance that rely on interorganizational collaboration. This complexity also affected the New Public Management, which, by seeking greater efficiency and flexibility in government, introduced conflicting values among the competing interests of market, state, and civil society (Jørgensen, 1999; Yeung, 2005). New Public Management reforms tended to focus this balance on the “soft power” of networks and the “hard edge” of bureaucracy (Pollitt

& Bouckaert, 2011). Each of these values tends to come with different types of interorganizational arrangements.

Like earlier movements, open government reformers are torn between implementing organizational changes that reflect administrative modernization through better technological efficiency and greater participation from citizens (Nalbandian, 2005). For example, public management reform movements that give more priority to informal institutional arrangements, such as the way informal networks are treated in New Public Governance, can struggle to implement reforms and administrative tools, such as regulations, fines, and incentives (de Bruijn & Dicke, 2006). Open government, by aiming to collaborate more with nongovernmental organizations, also introduces the likelihood of tensions resulting from organizational hybrids, like new public governance. Some evidence suggests that despite the flexibility they offer, collaborations with the private sector or civil society are particularly likely to have complex organizational structures that create ambiguity that then can lead to organizational failure (Cobb & Rubin, 2006; Demortain, 2004).

Interdepartmental discrepancies

Value conflicts in a public management reform may exist not just over a period of time or between different types of organizations but also between different governmental departments or policy areas. There are many types of public values involved in different spheres of public governance—from relationships among administrators and the environment and other stakeholders to intra-organizational actions and the transformation of public interests into decisions. Each of these internal spheres of governmental relationships has a particular constellation of associated values (Jørgensen & Bozeman, 2007). Open government has a whole range of different policy areas and is likely to suffer tensions between the different constellations of values demonstrated by each area. For example, information-intense phases of a project shape the value of accountability, while phases involving collaboration with external advisors or legal and financial complexity affect the value of understanding (Reynaers, 2014). Thus, effective implementation of reforms requires decision makers to make choices about how to balance and synthesize competing reform values in instrumental decisions about organizational processes or goals (Moulton, 2009; Nalbandian, 2005; Pandey et al., 2016).

Structural Barriers

Institutional forces

While some reforms may be wavelike in the sense of being unlikely to continue in the same form over the long term, the opposite problem can also affect attempts to reform. That is, despite changes in government rhetoric and attention-grabbing policy initiatives, the old powers and habits of institutions and groups stay in charge as the most significant external drivers of the reforms. Reform possibilities undergo a process of cultural screening by administrative traditions consisting of institutional structures and cultural ideas about how government and administration should look (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2007; Bach et al., 2017). According to Borrás and Radaelli (2011), reforms are driven by “strategic and long-term institutional arrangements” of institutions (463). In this perspective, open government reform is driven by deeply entrenched institutional forces in society that keep control over reforms even though the reforms may seem like a current change (i.e., like a new wave).

Jane Gingrich (2015) calls these powerful instrumental forces the *logics of administrative change*. According to Gingrich’s theory, history tends to recycle through reform approaches, but they always emphasize the same value perspective or logic. All governments have these logics, and they tend to shape each subsequent phase of reform. In open government reforms, the logics may strongly influence how decisions are made to balance the interests of political leaders, technology innovators, civil society actors, and citizens. While open government poses several new reform ideas on paper, these logics of administrative change are still in place and therefore influence the prospects of the reforms as they unfold. Deeply entrenched institutional logics inevitably shape the new reform and destine the reform to succumb to a similar set of problems.

The influence of global powers

The entrenched institutional processes of reform show that instrumental processes of domestic open government reform trends are in constant tension with international processes, even when the global picture suggests a dominant process of adoption and integration. Country- and local-level processes that reveal unique cultural or institutional characteristics of an administrative system are intertwined with the large-scale processes of change (Bevir, Rhodes, & Weller, 2003; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Country- and

local-level factors influence the particular paths that reforms take but, simultaneously, larger structural economic and political forces exert pressure and shape the scale and depth of the reforms. We can see evidence of this pattern if we look back on other recent public management reforms. For example, *rechtsstaat* countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands, have a strong legal concept of administrative decision making, which means that reforms such as New Public Management and New Public Governance, while influential, are controlled by a system of courts and legal hierarchy (Bach et al., 2017).

Open government reforms also are driven by global political powers. Intergovernmental organizations, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and international multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank, have adopted their own views of open government reforms, and they have financial and political instruments that they wield in order to direct country reforms in a certain direction. While such influences ostensibly have the objective of creating better governance systems, they are criticized for being heavy-handed and creating country path dependency, which prevents the emergence of locally grown reforms.

Economic and technological developments

Additionally, large-scale global processes involving technological developments and economic shifts can influence the shape of reform (Charles, de Jong, & Ryan, 2011). Open government reforms depend on the affordances provided for technological innovations. Through mimetic processes of learning, imitation, and technology sharing among countries, reform movements can diffuse across whole regions leading to similar patterns of change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991), while economic relationships in terms of trading goods and information are a channel for dispersion of ideas and sharing resources that support reforms. So intergovernmental processes between countries, even across entire global regions, can be significantly influenced by economic fortune.

The problem with these processes for open government reformers is that they are very difficult for individual decision makers to control, let alone the country governments of which they are part, and the path of reform under such circumstances is very unpredictable. Will open government reform end up applied as a one-size-fits-all model by global pressures

and intergovernmental institutions? All types of reforms evidence a tension between these global forces from major international institutions and those from local forces. In these instances, domestic actors can do little to adapt new reform ideas to national and local needs.

Political Conflicts

Institutional crises

Research by Boin and t'Hart (2003) shows how limitations in public management reforms come fundamentally from the fact that reforms are driven not by rational-instrumental visions of improvement, as we might expect, but rather from crises that no one planned or predicted. Along this line of reasoning, decision makers drive reforms not for the novelty or potential impact of a reform per se but rather for the need to manage systems that no longer function. This also has implications for the longevity of reforms, which are used to tackle particular crises—not to deliver long-term solutions. Thus, when the New Public Management emerged as a novel reform approach, it was primarily rivaling a prior approach viewing bureaucracies as poorly functioning and bureaucratic (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011; Randma-Liiv, 2008). The New Public Management was subsequently treated in Western administrative traditions as a panacea for an impossible range of different bureaucratic problems (Hood, 1991).

The same logic could be applied to open government reform, which has been accused of being a technology-inspired reinterpretation of New Public Management ideas of market liberalism (Bates, 2014; Catlaw & Sandberg, 2014). Some of the drivers of the open government movement, such as the decline of public trust in government and the growing awareness among citizens of government (under)performance and the need to monitor, could lead to knee-jerk reaction without consideration of solving underlying problems of public sector malaise (Green, 2010). If this was the case, we should hold little confidence in its capacity for longevity.

Faddism and short-term perspectives

Open government reformers claim to have a bold plan for change that could bring about fundamental improvements in the public sector. But as we have seen in the discussion of public management reform history, the various

types of reform always touted their novelty in order to communicate what value they would add to existing governance practices. Critics of reforms have argued that despite the claims of reform champions, upon closer inspection, the originality of new reform ideas is often unclear (Lynn, 2001).

We characterized reform movements earlier as fluctuating, evanescent phenomena, perhaps analogous to ocean tides, as Paul Light suggested. These characterizations expose reforms to criticism that they are really just fads or temporary fashions that exist as an expression of the desire for something new and different rather than what their champions claim, which is that they are rational-instrumental efforts with intrinsic values of greater effectiveness, efficiency, or better governance.

Competing policy actors

Open government reformers join a chorus of other political actors with different visions for public sector reform. In Kingdon's (1984) multiple streams theory, this competition for policy attention is viewed as a normal part of democratic government. The multiple streams approach to policy change involves numerous and shifting actors and technology management challenges that converge to shape new policy goals and preferences. Occasional shifts to new models of reform are called *policy windows* because, at these sporadic moments, the multiple streams have come together in the right combination of unsolved external problems, pressure for change, and the means to achieve change. Open government is exerting strong sway on the public policy marketplace. But the shifting character of policy windows underlines the seeming fate of many public management reforms as short-lived trends rather than rationally conceived plans with long-term potential (Zahariadis, 2008).

CONCLUSIONS

The idea of open government has deep roots in the theory of government. Since at least the time of the Enlightenment, scholars have debated about the kinds of systems that adequately serve the values and needs of governing and citizenship in a democracy, and they have put the value of openness at the center of those debates. But only since the growth of the mass

media—and, more recently, the internet—has the governing basis for access to information and participation created a specific approach to governance focused entirely around openness. Open government emphasizes three different policy areas—transparency, participation, and accountability—and is supported by the fourth component of technology.

Can policymakers be serious that this type of reform can have a meaningful and lasting impact on the organization of governments? We argued here that answering this question involves first considering open government reform alongside the other major reform movements in the modern era of public administration. Open government belongs to an emergent group of reforms called Late Modern Technocracy that emphasizes technology and a mixed approach to adapting the benefits of prior movements such as the New Public Management and New Public Governance. It may be hasty to declare the passing away of these earlier reforms entirely, as one of the critical characteristics of the Late Modern Technocracy is the way these earlier reforms are used and integrated in new ways.

Open government adopts some of the ideas of New Public Management reforms, such as private and nonprofit sector collaboration, a focus on service delivery, and performance measurement. But it is also completely new in other ways, such as in its interest in democracy and technology and its attraction to addressing a diverse range of policy and social goals. What can we expect from this new reform movement? Based on the problems suffered by the New Public Management, there are many reasons to be skeptical. We have highlighted four of the weightiest problems and elaborated how these problems could play out in the case of open government. There has been plenty of time now for public administration scholars to look back on New Public Management, and their findings suggest that we should be very cautious indeed when listening to the optimistic claims of open government supporters.

This is a section of [doi:10.7551/mitpress/13984.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/13984.001.0001)

The Power of Partnership in Open Government

Reconsidering Multistakeholder Governance Reform

By: Suzanne J. Piotrowski, Daniel Berliner, Alex Ingrams

Citation:

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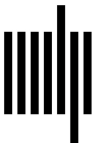
DOI: 10.7551/mitpress/13984.001.0001

ISBN (electronic): 9780262372091

Publisher: The MIT Press

Published: 2022

The open access edition of this book was made possible by generous funding and support from the authors



The MIT Press

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The open access edition of this book was made possible by generous funding from the Lois and Samuel Pratt Program for Freedom of Information at Rutgers Law School and the Institute of Public Administration at Leiden University.

The MIT Press would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewers who provided comments on drafts of this book. The generous work of academic experts is essential for establishing the authority and quality of our publications. We acknowledge with gratitude the contributions of these otherwise uncredited readers.

This book was set in Adobe Garamond and Berthold Akzidenz Grotesk by Westchester Publishing Services.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Piotrowski, Suzanne J., 1973– author. | Berliner, Daniel, author. | Ingrams, Alex, author.

Title: The power of partnership in open government : reconsidering multistakeholder governance reform / Suzanne J. Piotrowski, Daniel Berliner, and Alex Ingrams.

Description: Cambridge, Massachusetts : The MIT Press, [2022] | Series: Information Policy Series / edited by Sandra Braman | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2022007845 (print) | LCCN 2022007846 (ebook) | ISBN 9780262544597 (Paperback) | ISBN 9780262372084 (ePub) | ISBN 9780262372091 (PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Transparency in government. | Administrative agencies—Mexico—Management—Case studies. | Organizational change. | Organizational effectiveness.

Classification: LCC JC598 .P56 2022 (print) | LCC JC598 (ebook) | DDC 352.8/8—dc23/eng/20220630

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022007845>

LC ebook record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2022007846>