Empowering Open and Collaborative Governance

Technologies and Methods for Online Citizen Engagement in Public Policy Making

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Abstract

In Government 2.0, public value no longer needs to be provided by government alone but can be provided by any combination of public agencies, the private sector, civil society organizations or citizens. The ubiquitous presence of ICT, citizens’ digital literacy, and their potential willingness to participate online can efficiently enable collaborative production. Models for the inclusion of external stakeholders in public value production can increase the degree of public sector innovation and improve the outcomes of such processes. Governments can use the most valuable resource they have, the citizens, by establishing opportunities for civil society and businesses to engage in an open government.

2.1 Introduction

Public administration has not yet found its new role in the virtual environment, but it is clear that closed, hierarchical governed systems will increasingly be untenable and open and collaborative production systems in governments and public administrations need to encourage stakeholders and citizens to participate in order to achieve and produce better solutions and outcomes. On his first day in office, US President Obama signed the Open Government Memorandum: “We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government” (Obama 2009). The European Union too seeks to involve citizens in decision-making processes, and
the Ministers responsible for eGovernment declared in December 2009 that
“there is a growing expectation from European citizens and businesses for their
governments to be more open, flexible and collaborative in their delivery of public
services across Europe” (Ministers 2009). Governments worldwide have under-
stood the importance of including citizens in decision-making processes, to incor-
porate stakeholders’ potential for achieving innovation, with the aim of achieving
better governance and better regulation.

The Internet enables government agencies to restructure their interactions with
citizens: “computer networks (…) harness the power of a larger population of
networked users” (Whitehead, quoted in Fountain 2001). The government will need
to have the ability to organize, coordinate and control complex policy domains
as well as provide the databases on platforms for encouraging communication with
and between citizens, institutions and business. This means recognizing the impor-
tance and necessity of sharing knowledge, experiences and resources in new ways:
networks and collaborative environments need to have ties to agencies, supply
chains, sources of knowledge and platforms which help citizens and agencies work
together to achieve mutual productive gains. In Government 2.0, public value no
longer needs to be provided by government alone but can be provided by collabora-

tive production between different public agencies, with the private sector, com-

munity groups or citizens. In this context, policies at the institutional and public
level will be able to fully utilize the power of mass collaboration within the legal
framework. This informal, non-hierarchical nature of mass collaboration facilitated
by electronic communication technology is not yet fully endorsed by public
administrations, and governments face the challenge of establishing a framework
that defines new institutions of governance and the roles so that the innovative
capacity of the market can be used.

The aim of co-productive value production is not collaboration at all means but
efficient and effective decisions that include all stakeholders. A new paradigm of
collaboration and innovation in public administration requires that certain online
behaviours be learned, understood and adopted. Furthermore, whilst the Internet is
able to support and encourage prosocial behaviours for the good of a community
or society, simply providing an online environment will not automatically lead to
contribution, participation and collaboration (Kreijns et al. 2003). Members need to
be engaged for participation and collaboration to occur, and such behaviour may
not always be visible: this is “lurking” and tends to have a negative connotation.
However, lurking can also be valuable in a democratic society where information
provides the basis of effective decisions and innovation.

2.2 Online Prosocial Behaviour

Prosocial behaviour occurs offline and online and is a type of behaviour that often
leads to activities with positive ends (Rheingold 2002) or results that benefit others.
In the online context, prosocial behaviour can include donating money, computer
power, software and documentation, time and attention, information and emotional support, working together and collaborating.

According to Amichai-Hamburger (2005), online prosocial behaviour is characterized by visible requests for help, but not always the people making the request; helping behaviour that can be made visible (but does not have to be); potential help providers that are not visible until they actually offer help; physical invisibility that reduces the barrier for help providers whose age, gender, race or other visible attributes lead people to discount their contributions in the offline world; online help that can be judged solely on the content of help; the ease of making a contribution—at any time of day, from any place, read and sent at one’s own convenience; and finally, the controllability of further involvement and provision of help.

But why do people contribute or collaborate to achieve a common end or a result that benefits others? There are several reasons, including empathy, community interest and generalized reciprocity. Individuals benefit from prosocial behaviour and are often grateful for it; groups and communities also benefit (Lakhani and Hippel 2003). Collaborative behaviours do occur online, and they represent different participative behaviours that may lead to different innovative effects, results and solutions.

### 2.2.1 Hyperlinking

“Without linking, there would be no Web” (Weinberger 2008). Hyperlinking, that is, the activity of making online ties and links, is part of everyday life, “created and situated in a political-social context” (Turow and Tsui 2008), and affects the size and shape of the public sphere by facilitating the wide sharing of information. The hyperlink began as a citation mechanism but is now both a navigation tool and a social behaviour that has social implications (Halavais 2008). On the one hand, links can be useful for providing trust and providing support (evidence), transparency and credibility as they are able to specify “the relationship between what is known and how it is known” (Turow and Tsui 2008) simply by linking to the source. On the other hand, hyperlinks have a gatekeeping effect, guiding users (Hargittai 2008) and their attention (Webster 2008), thus controlling and managing the audience flow. Few people “would create hyperlinks purely for their own use” (Adamic 2008); hyperlinks are social and used to express social relationships in a public space for others to see, as gifts, and to reinforce existing relationships. Hyperlinks affect the dynamics of content production, distribution and access, so it is necessary to understand not only user consumption of the Internet but also their navigation, attention, generation and how the content sources interact with one another (Napoli 2008).
2.2.2 Participation

Participation is one of the most important keywords when discussing the Internet and its development: in 2006, Time Magazine nominated “You” as the person of the year, “You” being all the users producing “user-generated content” by chatting, file sharing, emailing, blogging, socializing on the Web and creating Wikis. Since then, some of the tools and forms of communication, such as blogging, Facebook and Twitter, have been taken up by the formal political system and political public administrations for decision-making processes. According to Ferro and Molinari (2010), in some cases, citizens may refuse to use the official government spaces provided and thus influence the way online tools are used and adopted, and other citizens are involved.

Online participation involves a number of activities, including generating messages, reading them and responding to them, organizing discussion and offering other online and offline activities that could be interesting. Some scholars believe that the characteristics of the Internet such as anonymity and reduced observable social cues can encourage discussions and generate interesting arguments, that is, they are “conducive for public deliberation by attenuating the effects of the undesirable social-psychological influences on opinion expression” (Ho and McLeod 2008). In addition, anonymity in the online environment reduces the observable status differences, so that citizens who are less confident in offline environments will speak out in the online environment, leading to greater idea generation and increased levels of participation.

2.2.3 Collaboration

The Web is easy to use and enables new forms of working together. Internet users do not just read the content but want to use it and have control over it. Some of the characteristics of online communication (such as multimedia, interactivity, synchronicity, hypertextuality) encourage participants to engage in new behaviours such as new reading conventions creating new meanings and collaborating with others (Wood and Smith 2004). Collaboration is based on individuals engaging in loose voluntary associations and using technologies to achieve shared outcomes and can impact workplaces, communities, national democracies and the economy, as well as have social benefits, such as making governments more transparent and accountable (Tapscott and Williams 2006).

Peer production will continue with increased access to tools, applications, databases and knowledge, and increased transparency and skills. Collaboration will improve as businesses, governments and public administrations change their internal processes (Tapscott et al. 2007) and users learn and adopt the new rules of behaviour. Providing a platform will not be enough: it is necessary to ensure that users having rich and engaging online experiences, relationships and interaction. Thus, collaboration will need some form of management to help guide and support users and to deal with the complexity of such activities.
2.2.4 Negative Online Behaviours

Even though some participant activities are very successful (e.g. Wikipedia), in both the electronic and the offline context, the majority of help is given by the minority (who incur substantial costs in terms of their own time). Preece and Shneiderman (2009) state that for all the enthusiasm for the online environment, “the reality is that many Web sites fail to retain participants, tagging initiatives go quiet, and online communities become ghost towns. Many government agencies are reluctant to even try social participation. . .”. Although people will contribute time and effort, traditional offline problems such as the bystander effects or diffusion of responsibility and simply lack of participation do occur (Yechiam and Barron 2003).

According to Nielsen (2006), user participation follows a “90-9-1 rule”: 90% of users are lurkers (i.e. read or observe but do not actively contribute), 9% of users contribute from time to time, but other priorities dominate their time, and 1% of users participate a lot and account for most contributions. Take-up of participatory and open government initiatives is not large, especially for the government-led initiatives: an eParticipation project is considered successful if it is able to reach a few thousands of users (Osimo 2010).

There are many reasons why people do not contribute, some are selfish, but there are other reasons too (Nonnecke and Preece 2001). The perception of the current opinion climate (Noelle-Neumann 1984) as well as the perceptions of the future (Scheufele 2001) can predict the willingness to express an opinion or to contribute. Explanations for low levels of collaboration with governments include online government working processes that are a mirror image of existing (offline) services; a lack of skills inside public administrations; governments that do not try to generate value for the citizens; the technological assumption that if you “build, they will come”; online service infrastructures guided by technology rather than user needs and expectations; and governments that distrust citizens and do not really listen to what citizens say (Coleman and Blumler 2009; Ferro and Molinari 2010; Verdegem and Verleye 2009).

Virtual communities experience serious problems if there is a lack of participation and contribution, and where the majority of participants are so-called lurkers. Lurkers are those participants who do not visibly contribute online. Lurking is possible because of the technology used: it provides access without being visible or having to publicly participate. Opinions about lurking and lurkers vary considerably (van Uden-Kraan et al. 2008). Whilst it is on the one hand considered negative behaviour, lurking may well be acceptable and even beneficial: groups encourage lurking because in this way potential new users get a feeling for how the group operates and what kind of people participate in it. Lurking may be desirable for very busy groups; if all subscribers to a group were to participate actively, it could cause repetition of queries and result in an overload of contributions.

Whatever reasons lurkers have for not participating, it is important that they should not all be given the label “selfish free-riders” (Kollock 1999). Rather, it is important to understand lurkers, as ignoring and misunderstanding them will distort
how we understand online life as well as leading to mistakes in the way sites (Nonnecke and Preece 2001), participation initiatives and policies for increasing participation are organized and designed. Studies show that the lurker might be a valuable participant (Takahashi et al. 2003) and that lurking may have wide reaching consequences (such as leading to active participation in the real world), which are not yet known and require further research.

### 2.3 Creating Public Value

Closed hierarchy is the traditional organizational form of bureaucratic government, but nowadays, the word “bureaucracy” has a rather negative connotation and is mainly used to describe a hierarchical and inefficient organization. The notion and duties of government have changed over decades. Weber (1980) defines the state as a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Weber describes a patrimonial view of bureaucracy, where bureaucracy means (1) official jurisdictional areas ordered by rules, (2) official authority to enforce these rules and (3) a methodical provision for the regular and continuous fulfilment of authority.

Porter’s (1990) approach towards the nature and duties of states and nations is grounded in economic theory: nations exist as there are goods which are necessary but for which there can be no market because the transaction costs surpass the profit. This failure of the market justifies government bodies, which act as collectives for the benefit of all. Public transport, energy infrastructure or streets in low-income areas are examples of public value that would not be reasonable in terms of pure economical valuations. Porter concludes his analysis (in a pre-Internet-dominated epoch) by stating that the “proximity of [...] personnel, along with cultural similarity” will foster a free and open information flow, a prerequisite for low transaction costs (Porter 1990, p. 86).

Friedman (2005) rebuts Porter’s explanation, taking market failures as the reason why states fail to deliver public value efficiently. From the members’ point of view, contributing to the group’s political efforts is the production of a public good where the public is not the whole population but members of an interest group. Public goods theory tells us that it is harder to produce public goods for a very large public than for a very small public, and, according to Friedman, “there are a variety of social mechanisms by which it may be possible to provide, at some level, public goods even for quite large publics” (Friedman 2005).

Public administration should work to achieve legislative goals in the most effective and efficient manner, as stated in the constitution or as a legal obligation (Constitution of South Africa 1996; §18 AVG Austria). While political decisions may contradict this paradigm for good reasons (such as deficit spending), public actions need to be carried out efficiently: while the tax payer may lack the required information to question decisions (effect), he certainly wants to see his money spent efficiently.
Government production is favourable when the benefits outweigh the costs of production, so the bigger the difference between output value and costs of production, the more efficient the process will be (Moore 1995). This defines efficiency solely in terms of money, provides no alternative meaningful assessment of efficacy, assumes that public values can only be created by public agencies and does not account for the value created by and for citizens participating in public value production.

Extending Moore’s model of public value creation, Bozeman (2007) defines public value independently from public production processes. This means that the notion of “public value” is more psychological and sociological than just the measurable production of goods and services. Thus, public production has a creative dimension that accounts for effectiveness and a legal dimension, measurable in terms of efficiency.

### 2.3.1 A New Paradigm of Collaboration

Open government concepts seek to include society in governmental processes to increase efficacy and efficiency as well as citizen satisfaction. The ubiquitous presence of ICTs (information and communication technologies), citizens’ digital literacy and their willingness to participate online could efficiently enable collaborative production. The inclusion of third parties in the policymaking process increases the potential of innovative approaches to problems, as many minds can create new and better solutions to existing problems. Traditional stakeholders, such as unions, interest groups and associations of political parties, have been included in the process of policymaking ever since modern representative democracies have been established. Even if these traditional stakeholders represent large groups of society, not all members of society are equally represented. ICT allows for a new form of mass communication where many-to-many communication replaces the one-to-many concept. With the use of Web 2.0, individuals can contribute to large-scale projects, enabling the individual to participate in the shaping of his/her life world at a political level.

New policies are usually implemented on the basis of the policy cycle, itself an iterative concept that ensures that targets are met and implementations are evaluated. In open government, various stakeholders can participate at any stage of the policy cycle (Fig. 2.1):

- **Stage 1, Agenda setting:** At this stage, a problem is depicted and possible future solutions are outlined. When all stakeholders participate at this stage, the actual problem can be described in great detail, and possible solutions that will not fit stakeholders’ needs can be rejected at this initial stage.
- **Stage 2, Formulation:** During the formulation stage, all stakeholders define the solution required to solve a specific problem. This is the planning stage of the policy cycle, where all ideas and interests must be merged into one concrete plan. Protests from stakeholders against the solution can be considered prior to implementation.
Stage 3, Implementation: The implementation focuses on carrying out the plan described in the formulation stage. Stakeholders can actively engage in the realization and disseminate the new implementation to a wider audience.

Stage 4, Evaluation: The final stage of the policy cycle is the evaluation stage. Stakeholders that are directly involved in the new policy can give the best feedback, as they have to deal with the new solution. If the outcome is not as expected, the policy cycle continues with stage 1.

In public administration, the open policy cycle can be applied in policymaking as well as service delivery. An open policy cycle allows for innovation, as externals can participate and contribute to the discourse. Collaboration does not necessarily need mass participation, but the process needs to include experts and dedicated people who are generally willing to share their ideas and knowledge. The most successful collaboration systems, like Wikipedia or Linux, are based on the qualitative contributions of a minority of users. In collaborative value production, the public administration must provide the necessary input and information and encourage citizens to participate.

Co-production already has a tradition in economy. According to Pisano and Verganti (2008), different models of collaboration depend on governance structures (flat vs. hierarchical) and forms of participation (closed vs. open) to support innovation, where innovation is the key factor for the new products and concepts that are to generate increased efficiency and effectiveness. Depending on the needs of the institution that runs the collaborative platform, different concepts of such platforms are possible as seen in Fig. 2.2.

Pisano and Verganti established this model for businesses where improvements are measured mainly by revenue. Adapting this model to governments must take political and sociological factors into account as public value cannot be measured in financial terms only. All collaboration models require a certain degree of transparency, as information must be shared with all potential collaborators.

The innovation mall model uses open forms of participation but a hierarchical governance structure. This means that collaboration is open to all people interested in participation, but the outcome of all innovation processes will be evaluated by

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Fig. 2.1 Policy cycle according to Müller (2010)
governing body such as public administration. The peer-to-patent project\(^1\) used the concept of the innovation mall to improve the quality and processing time of administrative procedures (Noveck 2009). A backlog of 600,000 applications at the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) was reduced with the help of third parties. The project opened the analysis of applications to external experts, who, on the basis of their expertise and contributions, were able to help reduce the time required for issuing patents from 44 to 23 months. Members of the public were welcome to participate, but USPTO officials checked the proposed solutions on their correctness.

The Innovation Community is open in terms of participation and leaves governance to the community. This method of innovation was applied by the US administration during the Open Government Dialogue\(^2\) in 2009. The federal government asked all citizens interested in improving government services and efficiency to present their ideas: 15,000 users discussed 4,262 ideas, writing 26,000 comments. The ideas were ranked by the users with 356,000 votes. The users’ rankings showed that legalizing marijuana was a top priority, but this has not been realized by the federal government. The advantage of open collaboration is that the community brings new ideas; the next issue is then to see if any of the new ideas can actually be used for problem solving. If users’ inputs are not taken seriously, the community might feel misused. At least concrete feedback must be given if popular ideas are not being considered.

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In a hierarchical governance structure, the public administration reserves the right to decide what ideas to keep and which ones to reject. Thus, the elite circle, using hierarchical governance and a closed participation model, meets traditional collaborative production run by public agencies. The initial stage of such a collaborative process is crucial, as the agenda must be set in detail. The elite circle consists of experts who are asked to provide solutions for a particular problem predefined by public administration. In Austria, the political parties’ parliamentary clubs regularly invite stakeholders to present their solutions, but these externals cannot influence what the decision-makers actually take into account. The collaborative model for a consortium is based on flat governance and closed participation. The consortium is selected by the governance body and usually consists of experts that tackle a wide field where various improvements can be made. Within the selected field, members of the consortium can tackle any problems and propose any solutions. The consortium defines the agenda during the course of a collaborative process. In public administrations, the final decision regarding the implementation remains with the respective authority, but the consortium model can be sustainable only if the consortium’s propositions are listened to and taken seriously. This method was applied in the Austrian constitutional convention (Verfassungskonvent\textsuperscript{3}), the working group that discussed profound changes to be made to the Austrian constitution. From 2003 to 2005, the constitutional convention discussed and agreed on reforms of the Austrian state, but the government has not implemented substantial parts of the recommendations.

Using these collaboration models in government or public administration is different than in business. Public administrations are determined to spend money reasonably, as it is tax money that is being spent. Consequently, this limits risk taking and the culture of failure in public administrations and government projects must be successful from the beginning. Businesses, on the other hand, allow failure to a certain degree when launching innovation processes, as one successful project will refinance a handful of failed projects.

### 2.3.2 Collaboration Model for Public Value Production

Merging the above concepts of collaboration with the potentials of the open policy cycle offers public administrations the opportunity to define their needs internally and then choose a procedure that provides the best solutions. The degree of participation and governance as well as the open stages of the policy cycle can be chosen freely. The differences between Pisano’s and Verganti’s models of collaboration are gradual, as the degree of governance and participation can change even within different phases of one project. The following model describes the creation of public value by use of open collaboration (Fig. 2.3).

The framework of this model is set by the policy cycle as basis for the production of public value. Ideally, the processes within the policy cycle of governmental projects are transparent so that the interested public can follow developments. At different stages of the policy cycle, governmental agencies can interact with participative stakeholders by sharing data and information about the project. These can be top-down and/or bottom-up processes depending on the collaboration model. The actual transaction that can bring innovation to public sector projects can also be achieved with top-down and/or bottom-up processes. All stakeholders of the collaboration process as well as lurkers who follow the process will eventually inform the civil society about new projects and outcomes and consequently support its integration into society. The outcome of the collaboration and innovation process is new or improved public value. This leads to benefits for civil society though individuals might not notice to take for granted.

The theoretical framework of open government gives citizens the space to actively engage in shaping the state they live in (Parycek and Sachs 2010). Citizens are empowered as governments become more transparent, participatory and collaborative. Consequently, citizens gain further responsibilities as they interact with government and public administration more intensely than in traditional governmental structures. In order to provide public spaces for collaborative activities, public administrations need to assess what kind of collaboration model is needed to reach the required objectives. The aim of collaborative value production is not collaboration at all means but efficient and effective decisions that include all stakeholders. The most successful projects of citizen engagement focus on regional or municipal issues, as citizens are the experts of their local environment and issues.

Public administration must address citizens and business as equal stakeholders of the collaborative production cycle. Even if successful innovation cannot always
be granted, public administration will be able to gain knowledge for further improvements of collaboration processes. If governments create opportunities for civil society, business and public administration to engage in an open government, then they can use the most valuable resource they have, the citizens. All stakeholders of these processes need to adapt to changes in society and technology to achieve better collaborative procedures. Businesses already use the input from consumers to enhance their products, so government can do this too in order to increase citizen satisfaction.

2.4 Discussion

The impact of Web 2.0 on society results in a paradigm shift based on real-time, geographically independent communication and information access. Parts of the young generation of digital natives use social media and ICT to share content and work collaboratively in networks. These young adults will become the opinion leaders and decision-makers in the near future. It is only a matter of time until their ideas and attitudes have a serious impact on society, as present developments show. O’Reilly frequently demanded “Government as a Platform” (Lathrop and Ruma 2010) by investigating the key success factors of Web 2.0 platforms and their respective models to incorporate people’s innovation potential. O’Reilly enumerates the adoption of open standards, simple interfaces, a design for participation with low entry barriers as properties of successful platforms in economy, but leaves the possible implications caused by a target mismatch between economy and government unanswered. The goal conflict between maximizing shareholder value vs. public value will result in a different and more complex role description and good practice library than the role of the economy platform provider in peer production. Public administration seeks to utilize the collaborative production model of economy for citizen’s satisfaction. However, utilizing this potential requires participation in an environment where the administration has not yet established the required procedures, organizational culture and captive mind set.

Noveck (2009) looks for answers in the design elements of collaborative democracy and describes granularity, groups and reputation as the key enabling properties for successful participation. Granularity enables peers to engage in the best manner and assures a high level of involvement, as a complex problem can be broken down in smaller and more manageable pieces. “Groupness” is well observed in real life as well as thriving online communities: the human’s impulse for cohesion in groups has to be supported by virtual communities to enable high participation rates. In absence of monetary remuneration of citizens’ value production, rating and reputation is one form of social compensation, a form of virtual currency widely accepted in online communities. These are the elements that have allowed Linux to be so successful. Yet to erect policies by and for the administration has to reflect these mechanics of civil engagement; policies, which turn ideas and visions into concrete measures to ensure equal possibilities among citizens, and to deliver the aims of the administration, with no individual left behind.
2.4.1 Fostering Innovation

In modern democracies, the law emanates from the people. Governments represent the people; therefore, governments have to include the people into the decision-making process at various levels. Collaborative value production triggered by public administration can engage citizens in shaping the regulated terms of coexistence. Electronic collaboration will still need leaders and persons who are responsible for monitoring and supporting such processes. The role of the civil servant in such a process must be redefined, as the present confining guidelines for civil servants are not flexible enough for innovation processes based on using the Web. Innovation always starts with criticizing existing mechanisms and thinking beyond given constraints. Civil servants are presently asked to follow guidelines that on the one hand secure neutral perspectives and ensure the correct treatment of all citizens but on the other hand limit civil servants, as they cannot take points of view that contradict existing regulations.

The Internet offers anonymity to users, and this anonymity can be an advantage in innovation culture. As some groups, for example, civil servants, cannot speak freely about all the agendas they are interested in, anonymity allows such user groups to participate more freely. When the goal of an innovation process is to get the best ideas, it does not matter where the ideas come from. Consequently, anonymity can encourage participation and innovation as the contributing user must not be afraid of resentment against his/her real personality.

However, anonymity has a downside. The amount of radical, undesired and simply useless contributions increases in an anonymous environment. People are more likely to denounce and verbally attack (“flame”) others when they can hide behind a virtual identity. Using several virtual identities in an online discussion process can also be a way to manipulate the discussion. Moreover, government must decide if contributions to governmental projects can be made by citizens affected by the issue, all citizens, non-citizens or virtual identities.

The models given in this chapter allow governments to simply use collaboration. Civil servants will have to decide at what stage the policy cycle is to be opened and what collaboration model to choose. The flexibility of open collaboration models should be used by governments to design the processes exactly to the needs of a project.

2.4.2 Paradigm Change in Public Administration

The literature review above presents the reasons why government bodies exist and who is responsible for creating public value. Recent literature acknowledges the role of the civil society, “les citoyennes” in Habermasian parlance, yet assessing the value they create is difficult at its best. Instead of trying to erect such a model, which according to Bozeman (2007) would be almost impossible to evaluate anyway, the identification of motivating factors to stimulate engagement suffices. The question is whether public engagement will always have a positive societal
effect, and thus should be supported by the government. Answering this question imposes a dilemma for public administration. While the role of public administration is to carry out public policy, legitimated by law, democratic administrations influenced by Enlightenment have the tendency of becoming a diffuse body. These administrations do not solely carry out public policy for the benefit of all, but non-disclosure, overemphasis of data privacy and intransparency of actions develop a strong tendency to pursue actions which seem favourable from an administrative point of view. This concentration on self-sustainment raises the risk of bureaucracy and corruption. Thus, it is questionable whether the impetus of change can be induced by the public administration itself.

eParticipation as a mean for public value creation has a strong standing on the European agenda and that of the member states. Yet, according to Mayer-Schönberger (2009), no single state-driven participation project ever attained substantial and sustainable effects. The EU eParticipation report of 2009 concludes that eParticipation benefits are “information availability, better information, exchange and stakeholders accessibility to it, followed by greater accountability and transparency” (Millard et al. 2009, p. 17). However, information and transparency are enablers of participation and thus collaborative value production; thus, they are a mean instead of an effect. The effect of transparency and disclosure is participation, not the other way round.

Transparency can only be achieved by a combined approach: legal obligations to disclose data, organizational change to foster collaboration between government entities instead of thinking in silos and supporting a social behaviour of collaboration between government bodies as well as in their relationship to stakeholders. Behavioural change, for example, and “open attitude” cannot be demanded from people but supported by organizational change following an overall corporate culture of disclosure and openness. The so-called Civil Servant 2.0 is fluent in using the Internet as an information broker, understands network effects triggered by social media, acts as a knowledge worker in an environment which fosters competition between departments because of comparable services and is supported by charismatic leaders (Fig. 2.4).

![Fig. 2.4](image-url) Data and information transparency as a prerequisite for participation
While this impetus of change is unlikely to come out of public administration itself, exogenous factors as economic and society pressures make that change unavoidable. Economic pressure requires new and innovative ways to carry out public policies at reduced costs yet at a higher efficiency level. Society pressure arises from empowered parties and the civil society by their usage of collaborative platforms on which they generate data, information and statements which requires the administration to react. This direction of pressure can clearly be witnessed by observing recent developments of open government data portals. Enough pressure can force the administration to release data, even in the absence of legal obligation as found in the UK’s Freedom of Information Act or the statutory rights governing the disclosure of information in the USA (Höchtl and Reichstädt 2011). Today, these forces set data free and are likely to change our conception about who is creating public value for whom and why.

Conclusions

Governments and public administrations are obliged to inform citizens, as the latter are the sovereigns in democracies. Further inclusion of the sovereign in decision-making does not mean to change the present structure of democracies, as inclusion does not automatically lead to more direct democracy. Inclusion of non-organized citizens can improve the decision-making process which leads to efficient and effective results. Transparency and access to information are the basis for proper decisions, and they create trust that motivates citizens to be involved in collaborative processes. Yet, public administrations and government need to rethink their operational structure as well as the interaction with citizens.

References


Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, MD, pp 19–32


