TOWARDS THE OPEN GOVERNMENT ECOSYSTEM: Theoretical-Methodological analisys of e-participation in open government for the elaboration of public policies

Larissa Galdino de Magalhães Santos
Researcher and PhD in Political Science at the University of Campinas, Brazil.
larissagms@yahoo.com.br

ABSTRACT

The public sector scenario faces new opportunities for reform and adaptation, constantly stimulated by innovation from the new lexicon of open government. But the capacity for innovation is followed by tensions and criticisms about government structures and culture, and opens up options for participation in governance. Field analysis shows some progress, but points to the need for broader reforms in the public management architecture. Roy (2014, 2016) reveals contradictory positions on open government plans and the symptomatic need for administrative, technological, political, cultural, and social changes in the public sector. This paper proposes a new approach to open government as an ecosystem, which includes e-participation and open government initiatives. Our studies offer models of descriptive, prescriptive and predictive analysis through a framework for evaluation and construction of the plan in open government and electronic participation based on the cycle of public policies. At this level, we propose to establish the discussion about open government and electronic participation, to improve models of analysis through comparison studies and case studies. The expected result is a management tool for policy formulation 2.0 underlying the wide range of elements or dimensions that make up the decision-making process of public policies. The product is the production of a policy summary that points out the best forms of local strategies in open government and electronic participation.

KEYWORDS

Open government, electronic participation, public policies, public management

INTRODUCTION

The open government strategy supported by e-participation can significantly benefit the city, encourage citizen engagement, manage policies to address urban problems, and provide better public policies.

The conclusion and results of the PhD research on open government initiatives at the municipal level pointed to the importance of designing effective strategy in open government and participation to consolidate transparency, technological innovation, collaboration and active participation at the local level. But there is also the urgent need to adopt new perspectives and practices within government that effectively involve culture, government agenda, regulation, technological structure, and political will.

The goal is to improve analytical tools and create management tools for building a strategy on open government and e-participation that can engage citizens, provide best practices, and expand local government management capacity. Hence, to produce a management tool formatted in the perception of models and structure of decisions for open public policies, through the case study of the city São Paulo.

The axis that structures this analysis is that of public policy and e-participation, as they are elements that involve and intertwine the State, civil society, organizations and private entities, essential components for the success of open government. Cities bring actors and resources together to develop an open governance ecosystem, since actors are close enough to support innovation and participation, but different models and approaches exist, so a comparative analysis is necessary to better understand the different models and impacts since actors are close enough to support innovation and participation. However, different models and approaches exist, so a comparative analysis is necessary to better understand the different Models and impacts.

This article problematizes how open government strategies based on open government, whose foundation is public policy and citizen, are created and executed within the government. To answer this question, we propose the improvement of the models in layers, in the dimension of the political project, of the democratic norms and of the sociotechnical characteristics using the framework of criteria to analyze the case study.

However, public sector faces challenges and opportunities for reforming and adapting in response to the openness stimulus based on transparency, participation and collaboration. Aggravated by the low institutionality of the initiatives, the precariousness of the regulations, the low adherence of the public agents to the conversational culture, and the lack of feedback and dialogue with the public, the opening strategies are reduced to the implementation. Although studies recognize this complexity, it is not clear which perspectives are relevant for theoretical integration,

since the open government label reflects a divergent discourse between the democratic theoretical lens and innovations related to the technological content.

The theoretical mismatch sways technological reductionism or institutional complacency over open government. As a result, the literature has a limited development. The incomplete approach reflects both in the production of knowledge and in the political processes in which transparency, participation, collaboration, data, software and technology are employed.

RESEARCH QUESTION

In the face of related concerns and motivations, I propose a new lens to address the definitions of open government, through the metaphor of the ecosystem combining the different areas of the opening. The nuanced conception of the ecosystem, as a network of interdependent systems, provides an understanding of democratic programming, as well as the intensive use of information and communication technologies, advancing in the discrepancies of analyses and models of open government examination.

The objective is reflecting an integrated framework for all domains, taking into account the concrete form of governance, including various actors, sectors and levels of government. This framework establishes the open governance ecosystem as a way of designing and executing a new form of openness, anticipating strategic forecasting, informing alternatives and functions for current policy modeling.

Why is this research important? And why now? A systematic investigation of these processes or governance models is still incipient (Roy, 2014, 2016; Harrison, Pardo, Cook, 2012). It also serves to guide an open movement of data to maturity and political participation, identifying strengths and weaknesses, appropriate technologies, what works, and what does not. Together they identify the most effective ways of implementing strategies for using participatory technologies and open government.

The key point is to establish the connection between open data and decision structures. If there is a promise of democratic expansion behind these models of open and participatory governance, how have governments used the premises of open governments in their institutional structures? There is a relationship between technological appropriation and the challenges of open government to maintain mechanisms and forms of political participation, as well as technology-driven data openness. The article provides a "picture" of possible courses of action, but with a scenario-dependent trajectory, policy options, and best practices.

THEORETICAL APPROACH OR FRAMEWORK

The debate about open government and e-participation brings with it expectations that positively affect democracy, promoting transparency, facilitating access to the information necessary for participation and the achievement of social control. An open government provides for the need to improve levels of transparency, access to information, and facilitates citizen participation through collaboration. This requires the opening of the governmental institutions for citizenship, deep change in the administrative culture, and collective construction from the digital.

The citizen becomes an ally in the conduct of democratic governance and in the solution of public affairs. But participation requires much more than an invitation from the government. Participation is an active agent in the transversal development that composes the public policy process. We propose a new route, under the lens that the value of the nature of open government is transversal and permeates technology, innovation, information, transparency, collaboration and participation.

As such, it is the instruments or public policies themselves that are formulated, designed, and implemented based on the principles of open government. In this way, opening the government is potentially a strategy of public policy making. An open government is one that allows the participation of citizens and political actors in decision-making and training in public policies, but which essentially covers the whole cycle, in a broad aspect of involvement during all phases (Cruz-Rubio, 2015).

However, the theoretical framework indicates that the participatory platforms vary a lot in relation to the implementation of decision-making strategies and the representation of these processes and their capacity to influence policies. Lucke and Große (2014) argue that the debate prioritized only the first steps of the policy cycle (formulation, agenda and decision making) to the detriment of the other steps (implementation, monitoring and evaluation).

In submitting the proposal, models in participatory and open governance models are not watertight. Participation (e-participation) is my key-strategic analysis. The most qualified participation is based on information and transparency, as well as political equality. Freedom of expression is also a requirement for a range of democratic models, so I do not understand participation as an end to open government.

Participation is a necessary consequence for the evolution of democracy and its implication with public policies (CANTO, 2011). The relevance of participation is recognized at the theoretical and institutional level (ARNSTEIN, 1969; IAP2, 2007; OECD, 2001), whose levels of information, consultation and active participation are public spaces in the context of open government (SÁNCHEZ GONZÁLEZ, 2015).

Participation in public administration is a process of social construction of public policies, and in most definitions there is a common element of mediation between society and government, but strengthening relations with public institutions is not magic, and each participatory process is a project at a particular level. Investment in public policy formulation has always existed, but participation from open government requires more government investment (OECD, 2006). Ortiz (2010) points out that open participation is the heart, the systole and the diastole, of open governance.

E-participation repositions open government and favors success for public policies. Oszlak & Kaufman's (2014) comparative study of best practices in open government participation has highlighted the complexity and diversity of strategies, and a strong dependency on context, especially those countries that are more committed to participation, deliver better results.

Roy (2016) analyses how the dialogue between management capacities is atrophied in the face of political institutions and the relevance to the citizen, which unlocks public involvement, innovation, government, the economy and society. Consequently, the direction of democratic and open governance for a transforming architecture of public management depends on the insertion of those listed elements. Only with this examination can open government be redesigned from the collaborative essence of the citizen, as interlocutors of public policy projects.

The practices of e-participation reflect similar stimuli to traditional practices of participation, but also have particularized degrees. Therefore, what exists is a set of tools that couple to an institutional platform, or even dimensions of digital political institutions (maximum standard) that can modify or reconfigure other institutions, within an open government plan. The strategy in open government and e-participation is characterized by the defense of transparence plus participation and collaboration, these terms being representative of political values substantially related to democratic theory, relevant to broad citizen processes and actions, from voting to choosing for public policies, to the administrative and bureaucratic routines of government.

But it is important to admit that participation varies in different dimensions, depending on how the exchange between information and decision-making varies, as well as the relationship between participation and decision-making. Although participation is a resource that carries a political promise to the dimensions of open government, e-democracy, or e-government, ultimately its performance depends on shared understandings and the performance of the set of ideas applied to e-participation itself.

The new management paradigm 2.0 reiterates that models based on the formulation of policies and technologies are complex, and are implicitly linked to a

traditional policy-making activity based on the conventional cycle of public policies. It therefore encompasses the challenge of developing metrics and evaluation models for decision support, and simulation of tools that make the situation more precise, concrete and holistic, but which does not distinguish or discard open government actions and/or e-participation.

In conclusion, thinking about models of open government and participation is to promote its practical use, the possibility of prediction, and the similarity with the proposed phenomenon, but relating to concrete, avoiding abstract typologies. It is much more a perception of models and decision-making to create a self-sustaining ecosystem for the public, where engagement is an open government effort (LEE, KWAK, 2011).

METHODOLOGY AND REASONING

To evaluate the efforts of the open government and to present the instruments and tools that support the construction of the municipal strategies, the methods and techniques were selected according to the work plan. The research approach is qualitative and quantitative. The work plan is synchronized with the methodological steps. The first stage is the refinement of the theoretical framework, improvement of the analysis models and the framework based on relevant literature criteria, benchmarking design. The second stage is the comparison of cities with general theoretical principles, and the case study that allows us to identify the elements of the empirical description and the presentation of the results.

Through the deepening of the theoretical framework were defined the methodological and epistemological choices indicating the approach, categories and relevant criteria. The methods and instruments are approached with the support of political modeling techniques, gamification and political formulation 2.0 (MUREDDU et al., 2012; MUREDDU et al., 2014; CHARALABIDIS et al., 2012; OSIMO et al., 2013).

The execution of the analysis follows the following steps: (i) construction of the framework for analysis of the initiatives and the models of perception of the scenario and their potential, as well as the layered model from the point of view of the democratic and sociotechnical project (MACINTOSH, WHYTE, 2008); (ii) adaptation to the public policy cycle (HOWLETT, RAMESH, 1995) as a heuristic model and that is in accordance with the sequence of elements of the political-administrative process; (iii) graphical elaboration of the models, which are narrative documents and polygons that provide an interpretation and insights about the case of the policy (SCHERER et al., 2015; SHERER et al., 2013).

The analysis of the information will be accompanied by the new contributions of the produced knowledge identifying the cases of success, evaluating the results of the implementation and the improvement plans. These instruments with the reference standard of the theoretical-methodological structure point to the best practices, the best models, the performance indicators and the standard, resulting in the benchmarking for the strategies of open government and e-participation.

The methodological choices interact with the theoretical approach, integrating technological opportunities and the challenges of policy formulation. It is a kind of "political formulation 2.0", referring to a set of methodologies and technological solutions aimed at innovating the elaboration of public policies, covering all phases of the political cycle. The execution of the models was based on gamification, allowing for the conversion of participation as an activity that adds elements of competition, cooperation and narrative. Finally, we study policy modeling projects decision-making processes supported by information and communication technologies. This is the theoretical framework that underlies the methodological matrix of the proposal and will serve as a parameter for the ex-ante and ex post analysis of the initiatives.

The policy brief can present policy options to address issues of open government and participation, as well as recommendations. It is exclusively intended for policy makers and other stakeholders interested in formulating or influencing such policies, noting the importance of the host institution.

The evolution of open government strategies finds tensions between the traditional culture of public management, hierarchy and control mentality, and efforts for innovation and digital reform. The analysis highlights that the emerging governance ethos aims to stimulate the ubiquitous involvement in a more complete agenda. The scenario of municipalities is cautious and requires a holistic approach within the spectrum of participatory governance, which prioritizes the management of public value. The perception that participation is a norm rather than an exception is justified. The conclusion analysis emphasizes the need to research, understand and measure the costs, benefits and resources associated with the technological and participatory dynamics in an open governance arrangement.

CONTRIBUTION OF RESEARCH

This reflection provides information on how to approach the open data ecosystem, but also shows the intersection in the mechanisms of electronic participation and the initiatives of an open government, acting as a guide to public management.

This proposal involves three approaches. It is a retrospective achievement, as the analysis informs policymakers of their position in the field of open government and e-participation. It also has prospective priority, since it assists in the identification of points and improvements for policy makers and creation of best practice. Finally, it enables accountability by creating a set of criteria and methods of policy formulation and modeling with which it is possible to invest either for success or failure.

The proposal brings significant contributions, since the cases studied are local democracies, and it is important to understand the influence on their democratic potential as a permanent complement (semi-) for the formulation of national policies with the support of the technologies. In addition, the analysis of technologies focused on open tools of governance and electronic participation can identify trends that may potentially contribute or impact public policies.

The result is to reflect "much better" the realities of policy making, in often more dynamic and complex contexts, generating need for constant involvement, not only as consultation and information, but also as co-creation.

Our efforts will be shaped and guided by the discussion with the organizational, technological, social and political actors. The innovation of the research proposal, the scrutiny of other researchers, and the government itself (through new partnerships) reveal new ways of shaping governance strategies.

The rapid evolution of research and narrowly demarcated definitions of openness results in the urgency of this proposal as a basis for assessing the real practices and effects of data technology, government, and intelligent cities. The critique of this research alerts to the phenomena of economic stability, social democratic enlargement, empowerment, and accountability associated with the potentially blurred and deformed term of open government. There needs to be more talk about how government and technology support this fuzzy word of promises and deliveries.

REFERENCES

ARNSTEIN, Sherry R. A Ladder of Citizen Participation. **JAIP**, v. 35, n. 4, p. 216-224, july. 1969.

CANTO CHAC, M. **Participación ciudadana en las políticas públicas**. México D. F.: Siglo XXI Editores, 2010.

CHARALABIDIS, Y.; LAMPATHAKI, F.; MISURACA, G.; Osimo, D. ICT for Governance and Policy Modelling: Research Challenges and Future Prospects. In: **HICSS, 45th Hawaii International Conference On System Sciences**, 2012.

CRUZ-RUBIO, C. N. ¿Qué es (y que no es) gobierno abierto? Una discusión conceptual. **Eunomía:** Revista en Cultura de la Legalidad, n. 8, p. 37-53, marzo–agosto. 2015.

HARRISON, T. M.; PARDO, T. A.; COOK, M. Creating Open Government Ecosystems: A Research and Development Agenda. **Future Internet**, n. 4, p. 900-928. 2012.

HOWLETT, M.; RAMESH, M. **Studying Public Policy:** Policy Cycles and Policy Subsystems. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

IAP2. Public Participation Spectrum. **International Association for Public Participation**, 1997. Disponível em: <http://iap2canada.ca/page-1020549>.

LUCKE, J. V.; GROSE, K. Open Government Collaboration: Opportunities and Challenges of Open Collaboration With and Within Government. In: Gasco-Hernandez, M. **Open Government:** Opportunities and Challenges for Public Governance. Berlin: Springer, p. 189-204, 2014.

MUREDDU, F.; MISURACA, G.; OSIMO, D.; ARMENIA, S. A new roadmap for next-generation policy-making. In: **ICEGOV '12 Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance**, 2012, Albany. P. 62-64.

MUREDDU, F.; MISURACA, G.; OSIMO, D.; ARMENIA, S.; ONORI, R. A Living Roadmap for Policymaking 2.0. In: **Handbook of Research on Advanced ICT Integration for Governance and Policy Modeling**. Pennsylvania: IGI Global, 2014.

OCDE. **Participación ciudadana**: Manual de la ocde sobre información, consulta y participación en la elaboración de políticas públicas. México: Secretaría de la Función Pública, 2006.

OCDE. **Citizens as Partners**: Handbook on information, consultation and public participation in policy-making. Paris: OECD, 2001.

OSIMO, D.; MUREDDU, F.; ONORI, R.; ARMENIA, S.; MISURACA, G.; Towards Policy-making 2.0: The International Research Roadmap on ICT for Governance and Policy Modelling. **Relatório**. 2013.

OSZLAK, O.; KAUFMAN, E. Teoría y práctica del gobierno abierto: lecciones de la experiencia internacional. Organización de los Estados Americanos. **Relatório**. 2014.

ROY, J. Data, Dialogue and Innovation: Opportunities and Challenges for Open Government in Canada. **Journal of Innovation Management**, v. 4, n. 1, p. 22-38. 2016.

ROY, J. Open Data and Open Governance in Canada: A Critical Examination of New Opportunities and Old Tensions. **Future Internet**, v. 6, p. 414-432. 2014.

SCHERER, S.; WIMMER, M. A.; LOTZMANN, U.; MOSS, S.; PINOTTI, D. Evidence Based and Conceptual Model Driven Approach for Agent-Based Policy Modelling. **Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation**. v. 18, n. 3. 2015.

SCHERER, S.; WIMMER, M. A.; MARKISIC, S. Bridging narrative scenario texts and formal policy modeling through conceptual policy modeling. **Artificial Intelligence and Law**, v. 21, n. 4, p. 455–484. 2013.