

POLITICS 2.0: IS 'OPEN GOVERNMENT' THE WAY FORWARD IN MODERN
DEMOCRACIES?

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DEDICATION

To Leonard, my mother and my father, who always
believed in me and supported me,
and,
to all those who lost their lives for democracy
in the Arab Spring.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
Research Questions	4
Hypothesis	8
CHAPTER ONE – Democracy	9
1.1 Classical Democracy	10
1.1.1 Ancient Greek democracy	10
1.1.1.i Christianity and democracy	11
1.1.2 Republicanism	11
1.1.2.i Developmental republicanism	13
1.1.2.ii Protective republicanism	13
1.1.3 Liberal democracy	14
1.1.4 Separation of powers	15
1.1.5 Protective democracy	16
1.1.5.i Individual liberty	17
1.1.5.ii Majority rule?	18
1.1.6 Democracy and representative government	18
1.1.7 Synopsis of Classical democracy	19
1.2 Contemporary democracy	20
1.2.i Principle of autonomy	23
1.2.ii Democratization Process	24

CHAPTER TWO – Democracy, openness and technology.....	26
2.1 Open Government	26
2.1.1 What is ‘open government’?.....	26
2.1.2 Web 2.0	27
2.1.3 The development of ‘Open government’	29
2.1.4 ‘Open government’ and technology.....	31
2.2 Modern democracy, open government and technology	33
2.2.1 Civil deliberation	40
2.2.2 Civic engagement in democracy	42
2.2.3 Civic education	43
CHAPTER THREE – Politics 2.0 in practice.....	46
3.1 ‘Open government’ in practice.....	47
3.1.i United States.....	51
3.1.ii United Kingdom.....	55
3.2 Global movement for ‘Open Government’	61
3.2.i Open Government Partnership.....	61
3.2.ii Digital Agenda for Europe 2010-2020.....	63
3.3 Conclusion.....	64
CHAPTER FOUR – Challenges of the ‘open government’ approach	66
4.1 Changes in the ways in which journalism is conducted and in the role of citizens in society.....	67
4.2 Changes needed in the civil service in order to ensure an efficient service	67
4.3 Change in the political culture to become more collaborative and participatory.....	70
4.4 Change in the openness policy in relation to security issues	71
4.5 Conclusion.....	77
CHAPTER FIVE – Malta: a case study.....	79
5.1 Political and cultural background.....	79

5.2 Malta’s policy on e-Government and ‘open government’	82
5.3 The way forward	87
5.4 Conclusion.....	88
CONCLUSION.....	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	96

ABSTRACT

POLITICS 2.0: IS 'OPEN GOVERNMENT' THE WAY FORWARD FOR MODERN DEMOCRACIES?

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George Mason University & University of Malta, 2011

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This thesis is about governance in modern democracies. It deals with the challenges that democracy is facing in a technological age and the ways in which these challenges may be overcome. It also explores in what ways the information and communication technology can strengthen democracy and may be used to make governance more transparent, based on collaboration and participation with citizens.

The ultimate aim of the study is to show that democracy is ever changing, and any challenge may be overcome if it is considered to be an opportunity to improve democracy and make it relevant to contemporary needs and expectations.

INTRODUCTION

“In November 1959, for TV Guide Magazine, John F. Kennedy wrote about television as “a force that has changed the political scene”. He had recently experienced the first televised Presidential debates, against Richard M. Nixon, and realised that things would never be the same again. But not even he foresaw that 50 years later, that same communication technology would still be rewriting the rules of politics and government, continuing to open up yet more aspects of political life — not least by bringing the workings of parliaments around the world into our homes.”¹

The role of governments in the contemporary world is constantly changing. With the continuous developments in the technological field and the increase in social networking, governments are facing new challenges, to which they have to respond and react in a prompt manner, in order to remain relevant and retain their credibility.

Governments are therefore facing a new reality to which they have to act in response. Governments have two options they may choose to take and act upon. Governments may either choose to take the initiative to start seeking ways to engage in broad participation

¹ Paul Waller. “Editorial: The Openness of Government.” *The European Journal of ePractice* No 12 (March/April 2011). pp. 2

with their citizens and their countries' stakeholders voluntarily, whilst promoting and practicing transparency methods of governing; or they risk being forced to react and adopt such an approach as a result of information being made public through other means.

Recent events in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have shown how incumbent authoritarian regimes have had to bow down to their people's wishes. Wael Ghonim, an Egyptian Internet activist, who played an important role in the Egyptian revolution, refers to the Egyptian revolution as Revolution 2.0.² Although this study is not going to focus on the role technology played in what is being referred to as the Arab Spring, it is worth noting that technology is being considered to be one of the factors that has brought about changes. In the case of the Arab Spring, the changes happening are drastic and unexpected. But technology's role is not limited to the events that are making history only. Technology is playing a significantly important role in the daily administration of countries, the communication between the state and its citizens, and also attends to the demands of the citizens in a number of modern functioning democracies. Technology is also changing the citizens' expectations from their governments and accordingly, the governments' attitudes towards their people have got to change. This is precisely what this study will seek to enquire into; giving particular attention to the cultural changes that the ever increasing use of technology in governance will have on the society and its political culture.

² http://www.ted.com/talks/wael_ghonim_inside_the_egyptian_revolution.html (accessed 1st July 2011)

The first wave of digital enhancement of governance happened when the existing processes and available government services were put online. This is when *e-government* came into being. Government services became more accessible to citizen, and the system itself promoted administrative and operational efficiencies.

Now, a new wave of innovation is taking place. It presents a golden opportunity for governments to redefine their role in modern societies. This is an opportunity for governments to become a new platform in their respective society, one which “provides resources, sets rules, and mediates disputes, but [also one that] allows citizens, nonprofits, and the private sector to do most of the heavy lifting.”³ This brings about the development of: ‘open government’.

The notion of ‘open government’ is not a modern one that has come about with technological innovations. On the contrary, it is a widely accepted and promoted notion that was highly promoted by the Enlightenment philosophers. The notion advocates that the public should have the right and possibility to access government information and the obligation to analyse and scrutinise its work. These principles, namely; collaboration, participation and transparency, are recognised in most democratic countries.⁴

The term ‘open government’ is one that evolves continuously. ‘Open government’ has been positively influenced by the open source software movement.⁵ The open source software gives users the possibility to amend and contribute or input to the actual source code of their software. Similarly, the open government approach, will not only give

³ Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma, eds. 2010. *Open Government: Collaboration, Transparency, and Participation in Practice*. O’Reilly. Foreword xvii

⁴ *Ibid.* Preface. xix

⁵ *Ibid.* Preface. xix

citizens access to information, but, also gives citizens the opportunity to participate, and work in collaboration with the government. This will enhance governments' accountability and also lead to greater efficiency whilst decreasing bureaucratic procedures. The evolution of open government has led to what is now being referred to as "Government 2.0".⁶

In the same way that the World Wide Web has altered private businesses, media, and the way in which we communicate in our daily lives, Government 2.0, will be revolutionising the ways in which our governments seek to engage with citizens and stakeholders, and also the way in which they function internally.

Although this discussed revolution in the way that governance is made seems to be the way forward, there are limitations to it. A major concern is the fine line there is between transparency and the leaking of too much information that might put the country's security into jeopardy and damage its international relations with third countries.

In turn, the changes brought about by Government 2.0 will alter the political culture of societies. "Modernisation involves a fundamental shift in values, attitudes, and expectations" at the psychological level.⁷ Democracies have to continuously change to suit the modernisation processes that are constantly evolving.

Research Questions

⁶ *Ibid.* Preface. xx

⁷ Samuel P. Huntington. 1968. *Political order in changing societies*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. pp. 32

The main research question that this research project will seek to answer is: Do the changes that technological improvements are bringing about to governance, correspond to or contradict the democratic ideals and workings of modern democracies?

The policy behind the ‘open government’ approach is based on three main pillars: transparency, participation and collaboration.⁸ This approach may arguably be considered to be a development of Montesquieu’s system of checks and balances. The implementation of an ‘open government’ approach may therefore be considered to be a public watchdog of governments’ accountability and credibility. With this policy being implemented, governments’ operations will have to change and adaptations will have to be made to their traditional *modus operandi*. They will become accountable for their acts on a daily basis and not only during election time.

One of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment leading philosophers, the Baron de Montesquieu studied individuals and their contribution to society. He wrote about the expectations that society had and that society’s idea about how it could be bettered and improved.⁹ He advocated that through drastic changes in the government system, “citizens [would] be able to live free and fulfilled lives.”¹⁰ Montesquieu remains famous for his doctrine on liberal democracy that advocates separation of powers which would require a system of checks and balances.¹¹

⁸Beth Simone Noveck. 2009. *Wiki Government: How technology can make government better, democracy stronger, and citizens more powerful*. Brookings Institution Press. Preview. xi

⁹Susan Gordon. 2006. *Montesquieu: The French Philosopher who shaped Modern Government*. Philosophers of the Enlightenment. The Rosen Publishing Group. pp. 9

¹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 9

¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 9

“‘Democracy’ is derived from demokratia, the root meanings of which are demos (people) and kratos (rule). Democracy means a form of government in which, in contradistinction to monarchies and aristocracies, the people rule. Democracy entails a political community in which there is some form of political equality among the people. ‘Rule by the people’ may appear an unambiguous concept, but appearances are deceptive.”¹²

As David Held puts it, ‘rule by the people’ may appear an unambiguous concept, but in reality it is an ambiguous one. This study will look at how Web 2.0 has contributed to the development of the theory behind the ‘open government’ approach. The World Wide Web, has created remarkable way in which creativity has been enhanced during the past 15 years.¹³ The Web revolutionised the way that old media and software companies functioned, and also undermined the power that they held. This new approach is what is referred to as Web 2.0.

“Now, a new generation has come of age with the Web, and it is committed to using its lessons of creativity and collaboration to address challenges facing our country and the world. Meanwhile, with the proliferation of issues and not enough resources to address them all, many government leaders recognise the opportunities Web 2.0 technologies provide not just to help

¹² David Held. 2006. *Models of democracy*. 3rd ed. Stanford University Press. pp. 1

¹³ Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma. 2010. pp. 11

them get elected, but to help them do a better job. By analogy, many are calling this movement Government 2.0.”¹⁴

Web 2.0 will seek to understand if the ‘rule by the people’ will be enhanced through this approach. If this is the case, are there limitations to what extent the government can be transparent in its practices? Are there areas where information cannot be made public? To what extent is there a correlation between the ‘open government’ approach and the democratic ideals?

As stated earlier, the ‘open government’ approach, advocates availability and transparency of government data, increased and facilitated participation of citizens, and the full collaboration of citizens in order to fight corruption, empower citizens and improve governments’ efficiency. Up till now, there is limited information that is made public by the governments, thus any suspicion of corruption is brought to light. With the adaptation of an ‘open government’ policy, all the government data will be made public.

This leads to other questions being asked:

- At which point does information become too much information? Will an ‘open government’ approach act as a smoke screen to the serious cases of corruption or bureaucracy?
- Does this idea of transparency deviate attention from where it really should be? So, is there a downside to the ‘open government’ approach?

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 11

- What will it take for an ‘open government’ approach to be adopted and endorsed in a modern democracy?

Hypothesis

My hypothesis is that technological changes are pushing forward in the direction of an ‘open government’ approach to be adapted and adopted by governments in modern democracies. It seems to me that modern governments operating in contemporary democracies do not have much of a choice whether or not to adopt an ‘open government’ approach based on transparency, collaboration and participation. Governments cannot opt to govern on their own at this day and age. Citizens have become sceptical of their governments, they are asking questions, and are expecting adequate answers. Governments will either choose to take this approach, or they will be forced into adopting it.

Nevertheless, whilst democracy is strengthened and citizens are given more power, as a result of this shift towards an ‘open government’ approach, there are also some concerns as to the extent to which the policy should be adopted. Difficulties and dilemmas are most certain to arise in certain situations where security and transparency are at loggerheads. This study will therefore seek to bring out the best practices that should be adopted by governments in modern democracies, in order for the ‘open government’ approach to be a successful one.

CHAPTER ONE

DEMOCRACY

“Born as I was the citizen of a free state and a member of its sovereign body, the very right to vote imposes on me the duty to instruct myself in public affairs, however little influence my voice may have in them. And whenever I reflect upon governments, I am happy to find that my studies always give me fresh reasons for admiring that of my own country.”¹⁵

Since the early forms of democracy developed in antiquity, till this day, the tale of democracy is one that is continuously developing. Increasingly, more citizens in more countries are given the opportunity to vote for their representatives, and thus earn the right to hold the elected decision-makers accountable for the decisions that are taken on their behalf. “Democracy has become the leading standard of political legitimacy in the current era.”¹⁶

This section will seek to give a historical overview of the democratic ideals that have been established over the years. Given the complexity of the principle in discussion, the literature review will focus on the development of democracy whilst giving particular attention to the citizens’ role in their democracy, from Ancient Greece and Rome, as

¹⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau. 2004. ed. 1762. *The Social Contract*. Penguin Books Great Ideas. Penguin Group. pp. 1

¹⁶ David Held. 2006. *Models of democracy*. 3rd ed. Stanford University Press. Preface pp. x

developed by the Renaissance republicans, and finally focusing on Charles Tilly's observations on past democratisation and de-democratisation and the future implications of this, and David Held's theories on what should democracy mean today.

1.1 CLASSICAL DEMOCRACY

1.1.1 Ancient Greek democracy

In classical democracy, developed in ancient Athens, a citizen was a member of society who participated in "giving judgement and holding office".¹⁷ A fundamental ideal of classical democracy was the participation of free adult men in public affairs. The underlying justifying principle was that citizens should enjoy political rights and equalities in order to ensure their own freedom to rule and be ruled.

The key feature of classical democracy was direct participation of the citizens in both legislative and judicial levels. The assembly of citizens had autonomous power, and this sovereign power had legitimacy over the common affairs of the city. Another attribute of the classical democracy was that short term of office was used at all levels, thus ensuring minimum corruption and increasing transparency.¹⁸

The classical definition of citizenship proposes that citizens should be active on all political orders. Thus, in ancient Athens, all citizens were not mere pawns to a ruler, but citizens of their state.

¹⁷ Aristotle. 1981. *The Politics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Group. pp. 169

¹⁸ Nancy Evans. 2010. *Civic Rites: Democracy and Religion in Ancient Athens*. University of California Press. pp. 4

1.1.1.i Christianity and democracy

The world-view presented by the Christian faith changed the foundation of political participation and understanding, found in the classical model of democracy. Nevertheless, Christianity did promote the idea of political equality in a different manner: ‘equality of men before God’.¹⁹ St. Augustine advocated the importance that people are more concerned with the aspirations of achieving the ‘heavenly city’, and not ‘earthly things’.²⁰ The political philosophy adopted in the Middle Ages in Europe did not reflect the classical democratic principles discussed earlier. On the contrary, a Christian society was considered to be one built on Christian beliefs that were reigned over by God and the divine representatives on Earth namely the Pope.²¹

1.1.2 Republicanism

The rise of Italian city-states started re-introducing some form of political participation and representation. Although this system was not very similar to classical democracy developed in ancient Greece, it was a significant shift in political philosophy applied in the feudal system.

The only city-state to survive as a democratic republic was Venice, whilst all the other city states, started using developed systems of hereditary reign. Political theorists conclude that these republics were destined to fail and this would give rise to the need of having a stable monarchical rule.²²

¹⁹ David Held. 2006. pp. 30

²⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 30

²¹ *Ibid.* pp. 31

²² *Ibid.* pp. 32

The advancements in Italian cities during the Renaissance brought forward new ideas about political power, rule of the people and public affairs. The principles developed in the Italian city states were inspired from the models set out in ancient Rome.²³ Writings from Cicero (106-43 BC), Sallust (86-c.35 BC) and Livy (59 BC-17 AD) supported the democratic ideals promoted by the Republicans, namely “the vision of how government may be structured so as to serve in principle the common business of citizens” as set out by Cicero in *De re publica*.²⁴

David Held speaks about “*developmental* and *protective* republicanism.”²⁵ These terms are used to incorporate all the ways in which political freedom and participation are manifested in republicanism and liberalism.²⁶

“In the broadest sense, developmental theorists stress the intrinsic value of political participation for the development of citizens as human beings, while protective theorists stress its instrumental importance for the protection of citizens’ aims and objectives, i.e. their personal liberty.”²⁷ The developmental republican theory is based on the classical democratic custom and the ideals founded by the ancient Greek philosophers, “notably their exploration of the inherent value of political participation and of the polis as a means to self-fulfilment.”²⁸ On the other hand, the protective republican theory that builds on the democracy developed in republican Rome and its writers, discusses the high probability of corruption if only one party is entrusted with political rule. Protective

²³ Philip Pettit. 1999. *Republicanism: a theory of freedom and government*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press. pp. 9

²⁴ David Held. 2006. pp. 34

²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 35

²⁶ Philip Pettit. 1999. pp. 8

²⁷ David Held. 2006. pp. 35

²⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 35

republican theorists emphasise the importance of the citizen's involvement in the decision-making processes, in order to guarantee and protect their personal liberty.

1.1.2.i Developmental republicanism

The principle on which developmental republicanism is built on is that political and economic equality must be ensured in order to guarantee popular political rule that allows for self-determination in the interest of the community. Developmental republicanism promotes the separation of powers, namely a clear division of the legislative and executive branches of a government. The theory encourages direct participation of citizens in public assemblies, and respect towards the rule of the majority. Moreover, any public appointment has to be made by popular consensus.²⁹

1.1.2.ii Protective Republicanism

The principle on which the protective republicanism is developed is that political participation is crucial to ensure personal liberty. Lack of political participation could result in being ruled by others. Protective republicanism promotes the balance of power between all the levels of society. Citizen participation should be enhanced and promoted in all possible ways and via different and alternative methods. Lobby and interest groups are to be given the opportunity to voice their opinion and raise awareness with regards their campaigns. Liberties of speech, association and expression are to be given protection under the rule of law.³⁰

²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 48

³⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 44

Developmental republicanism was primarily discussed in detail in the works of Marsilius of Padua, and later endorsed and further developed by Rousseau and also elaborated by Wollstonecraft. Protective republicanism is very closely related with Machiavelli. Montesquieu and Madison also continued to build on the theory.

1.1.3 Liberal democracy

Historical development brought with it changes that created the platform for modern and liberal democratic thought to emerge. The fifteenth century till the eighteenth century were dominated by two different forms of governing regimes: absolute monarchies and constitutional monarchies and republics. The ruling institutions had a strong hold over their subjects and this stifled the possibility for the citizens to have rights within their state. Civil rights could only be gained if the tight grip of the ruling class was weakened. The different experiences of the two regimes changed the nature of politics over the years, and eventually made way to a new era of political theory.³¹

The liberal tradition was one of the outcomes of the political experiences during these times. Thomas Hobbes and John Locke were major advocates of the tradition. Liberalism promoted the “the goal of freeing the polity from religious control and freeing civil society (personal, family and business life) from political interference.”³² Eventually liberalism became known as the doctrine that allowed individuals make their own

³² *Ibid.* pp. 59

decisions and choices that affect their everyday life. Locke considered political power to be “held ‘on trust’ by and for the people”.³³

1.1.4 Separation of powers

The Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755), a French philosopher and political theorist, who was a close follower of Locke’s, wrote about how public power should be organised, and in what ways could corruption be minimised. He is who championed the constitutions’ importance and role within a state. Montesquieu focused on a system of positive law, which ensured the regulation of public affairs and the private lives of citizens.

Montesquieu advocated the importance of a civil society that included all active citizens, thus creating a deep sense of civic duty.

“As in a country of liberty, every man who is supposed a free agent ought to be his own governor; the legislative power should reside in the whole body of the people. But since this is impossible in large states, and in small ones is subject to many inconveniences, it is fit the people should transact by their representatives what they cannot transact by themselves.”³⁴

With this philosophy in mind, Montesquieu made the ‘division of powers’ within a state at the centre of his studies. In his view, there had to be an effective balance between the ruling power, the aristocracy and the people so that a sustainable way of governance is created. Montesquieu made a clear distinction between the executive, the legislature and

³³ *Ibid.* pp. 65

³⁴ Montesquieu. 1952. *The Spirit of Laws*. Chicago: William Benton. pp. 71

the judiciary, whilst arguing that liberty can only be guaranteed if there is institutionalised separation and balance of power in a state.

Montesquieu proposed a constitution based upon three distinct branches with separate legal powers. This way, power could be decentralised and a system of checks and balances could be created. Although Montesquieu's developed system of separation of powers left some crucial systematic issues undeveloped, his explanation of power, liberty and rule of law, was the most coherent.

Montesquieu's genius is in "his thesis that in a world in which individuals are ambitious and place their own particular interests above all others, institutions must be created which can convert such ambition into good and effective government (see Krouse, 1983, pp. 61-2)."³⁵ With the development of an institutionalised system, Montesquieu aimed at achieving a practical and important political and social arrangement for the modern world; an arrangement that clearly divided the 'public sphere' from the 'private sphere'. The distribution and organisation of power was what could ensure and safeguard liberty.

1.1.5 Protective democracy

The thinkers behind protective democracy, namely James Madison, Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, substantially contributed to the theory. Most importantly, they discussed issues of accountability and developed political mechanisms in order to ensure that the governors are always held responsible for their actions by the governed. Secret elections, standard voting and political campaigns that lead to the most worthy representatives to be elected, are all methods that enable citizens to voice their opinion. Moreover, citizens are

³⁵ David Held. 2006. pp. 69

given the opportunity to choose their representatives and political decisions. Through the mechanisms developed, a sense of balance between power and its distribution could be achieved, whilst giving due importance and respect to authority and liberty. The underlying principle of protective democracy is that governors should provide protection to their citizens, and citizens should provide protection to each other. This would ensure that the governments' policies reflect the citizens' needs.³⁶

Up till this point in the development of democracy, one critical question remained unanswered: who classified as an individual eligible to vote. This issue was not answered by the theorists behind the liberal political theory.

1.1.5.i Individual liberty

John Stuart Mill was an adamant promoter of individual democracy. Based on liberal democracy and representative government, individual liberty focused on the personal development of the individual. Echoing what Rousseau and Wollstonecraft had said before Mill, he promoted citizen participation and involvement in governance that ultimately creates a mechanism for self-development. Mill's contribution to the democratic discussion paved the way for the modern liberal democratic thought. Mill insisted that liberty and democracy create the opportunity of 'human excellence'.³⁷ "Liberty of thought, discussion and action is a necessary condition for the development of

³⁶ Christine M. Koggel. 2006. *Moral Issues in Global Perspective*. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Broadview Press Ltd. pp. 185

³⁷ David Held. 2006. pp. 91

independence of mind and autonomous judgement; it is vital for the formation of human reason or rationality.”³⁸

1.1.5.ii Majority rule?

Issues around the possible tyrannous majority had been discussed in a number of different contexts. French theorist and historian Alexis de Tocqueville, in his study ‘Democracy in America’ discussed the levelling process throughout society that was created as an extension of democracy itself.³⁹

1.1.6 Democracy and representative government

In his democratic advocacy, John Stuart Mill made a sharp and clear distinction is made between democracy and bureaucracy, or the system of government. Mill also discussed a number of issues and dilemmas that seemed to rise in the discussion.

“First, how much democracy should there be? How much of social and economic life should be democratically organized? Second, how can the requirements of participation in public life, which create the basis for the democratic control of the governors, be reconciled with the requirements of skilled administration in a complex mass society? Is democracy compatible with skilled, professional government? Third, what are the legitimate limits of

³⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 91

³⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 83

state action? What is the proper scope for individual as against collective action?”⁴⁰

Mill's reaction to these questions was that the Ancient Greek idea of the *polis* could not be upheld in modern society. Self-government and personal involvement in governance, notions brought about by the idea of the *polis*, cannot happen in a community that is larger than that of a single small settlement. The number of people involved in the idea of the *polis* presented a problem to Mill. Additional to this concern, other difficulties namely logistical ones, such as geographical and physical limitation, make the *polis* a complication when tried in a large community. Mill adds that when all citizens govern, there is the possibility that those most capable will take over from those with less knowledge and experience.

The system promoted by Mill as being the best one in modern circumstances is a representative democratic system.

1.1.7 Synopsis of Classical democracy

Ancient democracy, developed into liberal democracy over hundreds of years. The model of democracy became how we know it today when citizenship was achieved by all. This led to having equal political participation and representation, when electing a government through fair and regular elections.

“The consolidation of representative democracy, thus understood, has been a twentieth-century phenomenon; perhaps one should even say a late twentieth-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 84

century phenomenon. For it was only in the closing decades of that century that liberal representative democracy was securely established in the West and widely adopted in principle as a suitable model of government beyond the West.”⁴¹

1.2 CONTEMPORARY DEMOCRACY

The contemporary meaning of democracy prompts discussion. It has been built on a variety of democratic models and forms that have been tried and tested over the years. David Held points out four main reasons why a critical analysis of the different democratic models is important.⁴² First and foremost it is important because involvement in politics cannot be overseen or disregarded. Although some are indifferent to politics, the framework within which states and societies operate brings politics back to the individual. Secondly, if the issues around democracy are to be fully understood and reflected upon, the crucial issue that people disregard anything that is considered to be political in nature. By discarding politics, the challenges of the 21st century will not be resolved. It is only through modifications of the political systems currently being used, that challenges will be managed and dealt with.⁴³ “We do not have the option of ‘no politics’.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ *Ibid.* pp. 95

⁴² *Ibid.* pp. 259

⁴³ openDemocracy. 2002. Globalisation: the argument of our time. *Free thinking for the world*. January 22. http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-vision_reflections/article_637.jsp (accessed 23 July 2011)

⁴⁴ David Held. 2006. pp. 259

Thirdly, as cynicism and scepticism about politics are expected within politics, alternative models and methods of how to do politics and govern are needed to change this perspective. This way, political institutions and actors will regain their credibility.

Lastly, although there are existing models that have been proven over the years, we cannot get comfortable with the models of democracy that we are accustomed to. A continuous evolution of democratic models and politics is necessary in order to ensure that the democratic practices used reflect the realities experienced by the citizens and the society.

Held seeks to understand what is expected from democracy in the contemporary world. His response is presented in two parts. The first part deals with the nation-state at the heart of the democratic discourse, whilst the second part discusses the model developed by Held 'democratic autonomy', and the concept, also developed by Held, 'cosmopolitan democracy'.

It is suggested that democracy as a system is attractive because in principle it refuses any political good that is not generated by 'the people'. Political history and the contemporary political scenario show that citizens all over the world have been or are still fighting for self-governance and self-determination through the implementation of a democratic system.

Democracy is considered by many to be the best way to facilitate between different ideas at both individual and collective levels. This promotes political accountability for every decision that is taken at a national level, and also promotes plurality, tolerance, discussion and negotiation.

“The idea of democracy is important because it does not just represent one value among many, such as liberty, equality or justice, but is a value that can link and mediate among competing prescriptive concerns.”⁴⁵ Democracy provides systems and mechanisms that promote discussion and public dialogue that seek to resolve value conflicts. Held makes it clear that he does not suggest that democracy offers a solution to all difficulties, but a structured democratic system could provide an opportunity to discuss, debate and resolve issues. This opportunity might not be available under alternative regimes.

According to contemporary liberal thinkers, “the modern democratic state should provide the necessary conditions to enable citizens to pursue their own interests; it should uphold the rule of law in order to protect and nurture individuals’ liberty, so that each person can advance his or her own objectives while no one can impose a vision of the ‘good life’ upon others.”⁴⁶

Since Locke, this has been the central philosophy of liberalism. The state must provide security for its citizens whilst leaving them free to decide what is best for their own personal development and well-being.

On the contrary, the socialist philosophy from Marx onwards has promoted the importance of setting collective values and goals in order to ensure that no individuals are left to ensure their development on their own without any support. New leftists promote procedures that guarantee maximum accountability, in order to ensure equality and freedom for all individuals. The New right movements have converging views to these discussed. A number of the major elements of their respective theories are fundamentally

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 261

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 262

different. Nevertheless, there are some other elements in their visions that are shared: namely their critiques to incompetent bureaucracy and the expansion of powerful networks in society; and ensuring that the conditions for personal development are favourable and can guarantee free and equal development for all. These aspirations have been discussed over hundreds of years by diverse thinkers.

1.2.i Principle of autonomy

Held develops on ‘autonomy’ in modern political philosophy, and refers to it as the ‘principle of autonomy’. Held’s ‘principle of autonomy’ states the following:

“persons should enjoy equal rights and accordingly, equal obligations in the specification of the political framework which generates and limits the opportunities available to them; that is, they should be free and equal in the processes of deliberation about the conditions of their own lives and in the determination of these conditions, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others.”⁴⁷

This principle promotes the separation of power, in order to ensure that individual rights are protected whilst the individuals are given the opportunity to be free and equal thus having the ability to determine the conditions of the lives they live.

When discussing the most effective ways in which the ‘principle of autonomy’ could be applied in practice Held discusses in what ways democratic institutions should be remoulded. The main problems identified with the democratic institutions are the actual

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 264

structure of civil society that fails to create the conditions for equal participation, discussion and effective management over the political agenda. On the other hand, the structure of the liberal democratic state falls short of creating a system that has the ability to oversee the ‘civil’ power centres.

In order for democracy to flourish and re-establish itself as a governing regime that promotes the ‘principle of autonomy’, democracy should reinstate the power that a state holds, whilst structuring civil society in a sustainable manner. This would bring about what Held refers to “the interdependent transformation of both state and civil society”.⁴⁸

A democracy should be considered to be so if citizens have the possibility to be active citizens. This would mean that the citizens have at their disposition a set of rights that enables them to fully participate in the democratic process. One must keep in mind that if democracy is the chosen regime, a system of rights and obligations are put into force. The obligations in discussion include the binding obligation to respect equal rights of others, and the insurance that a common structure that promotes political activity is available to all.⁴⁹

1.2.ii Democratisation Process

Democratisation and democracy are often defined in four main types: constitutional, substantive, procedural, and process-oriented.⁵⁰ The constitutional approach focuses on the laws that regulate political activity. Through a historical overview of the different

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 276

⁴⁹ Daniele Archibugi & David Held. *Cosmopolitan democracy: an agenda for a new world order*. 1995: Polity Press.

⁵⁰ Charles Tilly. 2007. *Democracy*. Cambridge University Press. pp. 7

political regimes and the legal regulation of its political processes, the democratic process of the state may be analysed. The substantive approach concentrates on the quality and conditions of life that the regime promotes through its policies. The procedural approach analyses governmental practices to determine if the regime is democratic or not. Practices such as electoral procedure, the multiparty political system and political campaigning are observed and analysed. The last approach, the process-oriented approach identifies a number of processes that ensure democratic practices. Robert Dalh identifies five different process criteria for democracy: ‘effective participation’, ‘voting equality’, ‘enlightened understanding’, ‘control of the agenda’, and ‘inclusion of adults’.⁵¹ Dalh suggests that the fulfilment of these five criteria would imply that democratic procedure is being followed.

Tilly’s publication ‘Democracy’ discusses in depth democratisation and de-democratisation, with the main argument brought forward in the book being that the integration of trust networks, the insulation of public politics for categorical inequality, and the reduction of independent power centres all cause democratisation. With these three processes happening, democratisation occurs. Should the reverse of these processes happen, de-democratisation would be taking place.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 9

CHAPTER TWO DEMOCRACY, OPENNESS AND TECHNOLOGY

2.1 OPEN GOVERNMENT

“The three principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration form the cornerstone of an open government. Transparency promotes accountability by providing the public with information about what the Government is doing. Participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that their government can make policies with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society. Collaboration improves the effectiveness of Government by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the Federal Government, across levels of government, and between the Government and private institutions.”⁵²

2.1.1 What is ‘open government’?

⁵² Open Government Directive: Memorandum for the heads of executive departments and agencies. 2009. Executive office of the President. Washington D.C.
http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/memoranda_2010/m10-06.pdf. (accessed on 21 July 2011)

The fundamental principle of ‘open government’ is that government documents and procedures are made available to citizens.⁵³ The ideas that citizens should have the right to participate and analyse their governments’ actions, know their origins in ancient Greek democracy and were further enhanced by the Enlightenment’s political philosophers, as discussed in detail in Chapter One. The ideals presented in the ‘open government’ policy are in principle enshrined in every country that is considered to be democratic.⁵⁴

The significance of the term ‘open government’ is continuously evolving. Technology and its advancements have had a significant influence in determining what the term ‘open government’ means today. The open source software movement, that promotes the possibility that software users are given the opportunity to change and contribute to the source code of their software, has had a positive impact on the significance of ‘open government’.⁵⁵ This is because ‘open government’ advocates are promoting the same philosophy behind open source, thus calling for governments to start making their data available and encouraging their citizens to become active citizens and participate in the governments’ proceedings. The open source software model is being used as an example of how the ‘open government’ approach could be successful. Just as any software expert and enthusiast alike could contribute by editing or adding to the existing material on software, citizens would have the opportunity and possibility to contribute in governmental proceedings and crisis management.

2.1.2 Web 2.0

⁵³ Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma, eds. 2010. *Open Government: Collaboration, Transparency, and Participation in Practice*. O’Reilly. Preface pp. xix

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Preface pp. xix

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* Preface pp. xix

The open source software approach, and similarly, the ‘open government’ approach have become possible with introduction of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is the latest development of the World Wide Web. Web 2.0 features functions and services that are interactive, and allow two-way relations.⁵⁶ This way, Web 2.0 promotes interactivity and openness in editing and sharing information. “The key features of Web 2.0 are referred to in a series of seven C words – connectivity, communication, community, creativity and co-creativity, collaboration exploiting what Pierre Levy calls ‘collective intelligence’, and conversations.”⁵⁷ Web 2.0 is considered to be a very powerful new approach that has used remarkable new methods to harness the creativity of people in groups.

“Now, a new generation has come of age with the Web, and it is committed to using its lessons of creativity and collaboration to address challenges facing our country and the world. Meanwhile, with the proliferation of issues and not enough resources to address them all, many government leaders recognize the opportunities Web 2.0 technologies provide not just to help them get elected, but to help them do a better job. By analogy, many are calling this movement Government 2.0.”⁵⁸

Just as Web 2.0 is not different from World Wide Web but an adaptation of it, Government 2.0 is not proposing a new governmental regime, but “it is government stripped down to its core, rediscovered and reimagined as if for the first time”.⁵⁹ The ideals that are promoted through Government 2.0 are participation, collaboration and

⁵⁶ Jim Macnamara. 2010. *The 21st century media (r)evolution: emergent communication practice - Emergent Communication Practices*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc. pp. 54

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 54

⁵⁸ Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma. 2010. pp. 11

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 12

transparency. These are the same ideals that the ‘open government’ suggests. An effective ‘open government’ approach would change the way governance is carried out.

The first form of digital reform in governmental procedures was the introduction of e-government. E-government basically meant that governments started making their information accessible to citizens and offering their services online. This increased the governments’ efficiency and decreased bureaucratic processes.

2.1.3 The development of ‘Open government’

The introduction of ‘open government’ may be considered as being a “historic occasion to fundamentally redesign how government operates; how and what the public sector provides; and ultimately, how governments interact and engage with their citizens”.⁶⁰

The contemporary era is a defining one. Governments can either play a proactive role and adopt a forward thinking ideology that will enable them to lead their own transformation, or they can let the change occur without their involvement. The transformation process is a complex one that will present challenges to governments, but will also offer them an opportunity to redefine their role in society and regain their credibility, whilst promoting citizen participation and collaboration.

There seems to be an increasing awareness with regards this new era of governance, and leading countries around the world, are including innovative ways of governance. Such examples are the Open Government Initiative taken up by the Obama administration in the United States, data.gov.uk developed by the British government, Government 2.0

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* Foreword pp. xvi

Taskforce by the Australian government, amongst others.⁶¹ “A growing number of governments understand the need to distribute power broadly and leverage innovation, knowledge, and value from the private sector and civil society.”⁶²

Although the notion of ‘open government’ seems to be a radical one, governments worldwide are facing challenges that require stronger governments in order to be overcome. The ‘open government’ approach offers governments the opportunity to co-innovate with its citizen, to harness collective power and mass collaboration, to share resources that were previously inaccessible, to act in a transparent manner and work in an integrated and networked manner.⁶³

Don Tapscott in his Foreword to ‘Open Government: Collaboration, Transparency, and Participation in Practice’, also refers to the demographic shift that will be experienced in the coming years, when an exodus of knowledge and skills will occur as more people will be retiring from the civil service. Using the US as an example, Tapscott makes his point by referring to the number of people that will be leaving the civil service in the next five years that will amount to 60,000 people.

In his promotion of the ‘open government’ approach, Tapscott also suggests that the younger generation does not seem to be interested in a career in public administration or civil service. This would make recruitment of capable people even more difficult. Tapscott suggest that these challenges could be overcome with the adaptation of an ‘open government’ approach.

⁶¹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open>; <http://data.gov.uk/>; <http://gov2.net.au/about/> (accessed 28 July 2011)

⁶² *Ibid.* Foreword pp. xvi

⁶³ *Ibid.* Foreword pp. xvi

Another reason why the ‘open government’ approach might be attractive is because of the cost cuts that governments are making in their administrative expenses due to the global financial and economic crisis. Having citizens, nonprofits, and the private sector contributing to the governing of the country would help governments retain and improve their efficiency.

2.1.4 ‘Open government’ and technology

“There is a new compact on the horizon: information produced by and on behalf of citizens is the lifeblood of the economy and the nation; government has a responsibility to treat that information as a national asset. Citizens are connected like never before and have the skill sets and passion to solve problems affecting them locally as well as nationally. Government information and services can be provided to citizens where and when they need them. Citizens are empowered to spark the innovation that will result in an improved approach to governance. In this model [open government], government is a convener and an enabler rather than the first mover of civic action. This is a radical departure from the existing model of government, which Donald Kettl so aptly named ‘vending machine government’.”⁶⁴

Tim O’Reilly, a staunch advocate of open government and Gov 2.0, insists that in the technological era that we are living in, government has the possibility to become an open

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 12

platform for all. O'Reilly believes that challenges, innovative projects and social advancements could be made through an 'open government' approach, given that an application of platform thinking is applied to government technology projects. O'Reilly points out the lessons learnt from the open source platforms that would make the 'open government' approach affective and effective if they are taken into consideration when such approach is developed. The first lesson is that "open standards spark innovation and growth".⁶⁵ This happens mainly because when the barriers to enter the field or the market are low, all the energy is invested in research, creation and innovation. O'Reilly emphasises the importance to build simple systems that have the possibility to be developed by citizens and also have a flexible design that not only allows but also encourages participation and experimentation. The full exploitation of the available systems is to be encouraged and supported and the government should lead by example. O'Reilly expresses hopes that government starts functioning as a platform, paving the way to Gov. 2.0 that might be considered to be the next step. This approach is believed to have the potential to reshape the world.

Beth Simone Noveck, the United States Deputy Chief Technology Officer for open government, claims that currently, there are very few opportunities for the citizens to collaborate in governance. "With new technology, government could articulate a problem and then work with the public to coordinate a solution among and across government institutions and with nonprofit organizations, businesses, and individuals."⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 15

⁶⁶ Beth Simone Noveck. 2009. *Wiki Government: How technology can make government better, democracy stronger, and citizens more powerful.* Brookings Institution Press. Preface xiii

Traditionally, governance is made through representative structures, where decision makers are entrusted with the running of the country. Citizens participate in governance only every few years, when they are given the opportunity to vote and chose their representatives. The traditional channels of indirect pressure from the public to the representatives are the press, lobby groups and interest groups.⁶⁷

The contemporary technological era presents a number of new opportunities for interaction between the elected representatives and the citizens. Information and communication technology gives people to opportunity to work together. A redesign in governmental institutions would create different ways for problem solving and collaboration. This would bring about a change in the political and governmental culture. “This change will also create a new kind of democratic legitimacy, deriving its egalitarianism through many small venues in which a large number of people engage.”⁶⁸

2.2 MODERN DEMOCRACY, OPEN GOVERNMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

“Technology is the medium of daily life in modern societies. Every major technical change reverberates at many levels, economic, political, religious, cultural. Insofar, as we continue to see the technical and the social as separate domains, important aspects of these dimensions of our existence will

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* Preface xiv

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* Preface xiv

*remain beyond our reach as a democratic society. The fate of democracy is therefore bound up with our understanding of technology.”*⁶⁹

A historical overview of democracy shows that there are mainly two clear schools of thought with regards what weight and importance is given to the participation.⁷⁰ There are those who give high importance to political participation and consider it to be a fundamental component of self-realisation, and there are others who take a more conservative position with regards the extent of political participation and consider democratic politics to be what protects citizens from being forced into arbitrary rule. “From classical democrats and developmental republicans to developmental liberals and participatory democrats, political engagement is prized because it fosters a sense of political efficacy, generates a concern with collective problems and nurtures the formation of a knowledgeable citizenry capable of pursuing the common good.”⁷¹

The various models of democracy that have been presented so far, all cover to a different extent the two dimensions mentioned above. A relatively modern model of democracy, that has developed over the past twenty years, and first mentioned by Joseph Bessette, is ‘deliberative democracy’.⁷² This political approach focuses on improving the quality of democracy, by promoting informed debate, the pursuit of truth and the citizens’ ability to reason. Leading deliberative democrats Claus Offe and Ulrich Preuss, believe that the reasoning behind modern politics should be based on the ‘principle of reciprocity’. This

⁶⁹ Andrew Feenberg. 1999. *Questioning Technology*. 2001st ed. Taylor & Francis e-Library: Routledge. Preface pp. vii

⁷⁰ David Held. 2006. pp. 231

⁷¹ *Ibid.* pp. 231

⁷² *Ibid.* pp. 232

approach requires that citizens from every walk of life start putting more importance to the procedures of preference formation and learning within civil society.

The main argument put forward is that democratic theory should cater not only for the development of people's views, but also extend and reinforce the mechanisms on which democracies function and work on developing new ones.

Noveck mentions the disappointment that direct democracy advocates had when the use of technology to bolster different forms of direct participation did not seem to take off as it was hoped for. The idea of extensive push-button democracy or government by popular demand did not present a vision of participation of direct democracy as it was a limited proposal that failed to gain popularity.⁷³

Deliberative democracy seems to give a more interactive and contemporary view of participation that is generating interest around it. The idea is based on the notion that diverse viewpoints are debated and discussed. The developments in information and communication technology, and their increased availability to citizens, have put forward an opportunity to start developing systems that enhance the deliberative democratic principles. In practice, Noveck states that such proposed conversations have been difficult to achieve, namely because the advocates of deliberative democracy do not have a high opinion of the citizens' potential when it comes to forming tangible proposals or informed opinions.⁷⁴

Noveck insists that the real challenge behind deliberative democracy is to connect the civic discourse to power. "The political sociologist Michael Schudson writes about the

⁷³ Beth Simone Noveck. 2009. pp.36

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 36

‘monitorial citizen,’ who is too busy to play an active role in government. While it is important and useful that government is responsive to the watchful citizen, this passive vision does not recognize the full potential of ordinary people to share expert information and effort with government”.⁷⁵ Noveck insists that this is resulting in a loss of resources for the government. Society holds huge potentials that are not being fuelled to the government, resulting in a waste of potential resources that could contribute to decision making.

The difference between deliberative and collaborative democracy is essential to understand the distinct notions that these theories of participatory democracy.⁷⁶ Noveck points out the limitations of deliberative democracy whilst listing the advantages of collaborative democracy. Collaboration promotes diverse skills that make for a more lively conversation, whilst focusing on the effectiveness of decision making and final outputs. “Collaboration occurs throughout decisionmaking process. It creates a multiplicity of opportunities and outlets for engagement to strengthen a culture of participation and the quality of decisionmaking in government itself.”⁷⁷

Contrary to deliberation, collaboration is a means to an end. Whilst deliberation is focused on opinion formation and the general will, collaboration focuses on the participation and engagement that would result in information gathering, evaluation of material and the development of new ideas that could bring forward specific solutions.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 38

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 38

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 39

Novack suggests that due to the nature of the online environment, collaborative democracy is the easiest to be enacted. Familiar website and social networking sites such as Facebook and Wikipedia are built upon the possibility that individuals can contribute to the groups or the teams. The critics to collaborative democracy might suggest that collaborative democracy already exists in policymaking processes, particularly through lobbyists and non-governmental organisations.⁷⁸

What is missing is an effective way through which governments can respond to the public and the public's interests. This creates a challenge when creating a design that would be able to effectively tap outside government expertise and promote participation. Open processes would decrease the possibility of corruption that is likely to take place when decision are taken in groups of self-selected private citizens.⁷⁹

Governments must not fear new technology and the opportunities that it is creating when inviting participation from citizens.⁸⁰ Novack insists that through adopting a collaborative organisation, the government keeps itself at the centre of decision making and policy making whilst tapping into other resources from outside the government. As a result, a collaborative democracy would result in a more effective government. "Effective government, in turn, translates into better decision making and more active problem solving, which could spur growth in society and the economy."⁸¹

When discussing deliberative democracy, David Held emphasises the importance of expanding voter feedback mechanisms and citizen communication especially on major

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 40

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 41

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 42

⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp. 43

public issues.⁸² The aim of the mechanisms is to improve and enhance communication and understanding between the political elite and policy-makers, and citizens. This increased and improved communication would also improve the way that citizens form their political opinions and judgments, as now their ideas would be based on information that they themselves would have been able to gather and not on media reports and hear say only. Meanwhile, politicians have the opportunity to literally know what the people want as their constituents would be able to communicate their thoughts, wishes and concerns directly to them.

Held gives a number of examples how this communication could be initiated and sustained. “Examples include email access to public fora, using email to place items on the public agenda if they meet a certain threshold of support, special internet ‘noticeboards’ to generate debate or survey preferences on troubling matters, and more elaborate and focused access to television and radio networks to generate new spheres of public discussion and information provision.”⁸³

The potential usage of the internet is extended to give the public the opportunity to create solutions to social issues, such as health care issues. Held calls for innovative methods by which the software development systems could be extended to governmental national and international structures. This would gather the public’s know-how in addressing issues that ultimately affect the general public.

New technologies could start creating new models of engaging in coming up with solutions and new policy implementation. Certain global contemporary challenges, such

⁸² David Held. 2006. pp. 249

⁸³ *Ibid.* pp. 249

as the examples given by Held, HIV/Aids, environmental degradation and effective modes of delivering aid to territories in crisis, could also be discussed and possibly tackled in such a way, with citizen from all over the globe giving in their feedback and thoughts.⁸⁴

This approach would be promoting a bottom-up, or bottom-tested approach to politics. This approach can potentially help in providing more efficient solutions to the public's concerns and issues. This might lead to the citizens feeling a greater affinity with their government and thus reducing the animosity and hostility between the general public and the political elite.

Held states that the major democratic element of the use of digital technology in governance and politics is that it promotes and enhances communication between citizens and their elected or prospective representatives. Held gives examples of 'deliberative fora' used in California that encourage debate and evaluation of candidates: Minnesota E-Democracy and DNet. Minnesota E-Democracy is a non-partisan and non-profit organisation that is run by citizens.⁸⁵ Their mission is to improve and enhance citizen participation in the democratic processes in Minnesota, through information and communication networks. There are a number of other examples of other fora. In Malta political candidates contesting general elections, European parliament elections and also local council elections, usually invest in their personal websites which typically also include blogs. Interaction between Maltese politicians and the general public is very common on Facebook.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 250

⁸⁵ <http://www.e-democracy.org/about2.html> (accessed 28 July 2011)

New ways of interaction and citizen communication usually bring forward opportunities to explore possibilities for public debate. This would mean that the public dialogue envisaged by the ancient political philosophers who gave birth to classical democracy, could become a reality due to the technological advancements.

Held insists that the deliberative democracy model is still to be tried and tested in order to establish how far and to what extent it can be considered to be an innovative model of democracy, or a different way in which representative democracy is understood and can function.⁸⁶

2.2.1 Civil deliberation

A successful model of ‘open government’ is one that is based on an informed, concerned and civically engaged society.⁸⁷ Without such a society, ‘open government’ makes no sense. This suggests that primary attention and focus should be given to the citizens in a society. Motivation, knowledge, and skills are to be invested into society as it is what fuels a functioning ‘open government’ approach.

Douglas Schuler, a member of faculty at The Evergreen State College, makes a deeply associated connection between democracy, open government, deliberation and what he refers to as civic intelligence.⁸⁸ Civic intelligence refers to the collective intelligence that is channelled towards common challenges. “Its presence or absence will determine how

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 255

⁸⁷ Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma. 2010. pp. 93

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 91

effectively these challenges are met.”⁸⁹ Civic intelligence varies from one society to another, and is built upon the substance of the communication between citizens.

Participation and collaboration within society and democracy should be considered to be a way of life and not a duty.⁹⁰ John Dewey, an American public intellectual, insists that the building up of a civic duty should become a natural process for citizens. In return, civic intelligence would increase and be beneficial to all the global society.

His ‘open government’ approach offers a number of stimulating ideas that could remodel government in a number of ways that would suit the abilities of the civil society in question. The flexibility it offers ensures that the utmost assistance is extracted from society in the most effective, sustainable and rightful manner. The implementation of an ‘open government’ gives us, the citizens, the opportunity to develop our democracies and increase the potential of the civic intelligence in a cost effective and sustainable manner.

Schuler says that there seem to be some who think that ‘open government’ suggests less government and this seems to be an ideological position.⁹¹ Quoting the way President Obama reframes this issue, the question is not a choice between *less* or *more*, but between *better* or *worse* government.⁹² The main aim of adopting an ‘open government’ approach should be to improve the nature of governance, empower citizens and enhance civic intelligence. Schuler insists that contemporary challenges require feasible and sustainable resources to be overcome. An opened-up government that is opaque in its actions is what is suggested as the most suitable approach.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 92

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 92

⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 93

⁹² *Ibid.* pp. 93

What makes this approach effective is deliberation. Schuler describes deliberation as being a process of communication between people, during which their concerns are shared in an open, thorough, and practical manner.⁹³ The capacity of civic intelligence is built upon the quality of the deliberation process. Not arriving to a solution or answer that is acceptable to all is not a failure, but it is what sets a coherent vision of the future. This process of deliberation also helps in an increase of tolerance and solidarity within a group.

2.2.2 Civic engagement in democracy

“Despite the absence of universal success with citizen participation practices in government either before the Internet, when they were impractical, or since, when they continue to be hamstrung by the limited vision of what citizens can contribute, participation is both possible and desirable.”⁹⁴

Re-engaging citizens back into politics is considered to be one of the most important milestones in the contemporary challenges that democracy is facing. The model of democracy presented at the wake of the technological revolution, Gov 2.0 or ‘open government’, is highly dependent on citizen engagement and participation in the democratic process. Deliberative democrats hope that citizens would become interested

⁹³ *Ibid.* pp. 93

⁹⁴ Beth Simone Noveck. 2009. pp. 145

in politics and in return stimulate a widespread networking system that would have the potential to trigger a culture of comprehensive civic participation.⁹⁵

Information and communication technology support a greater and wider access to government participation, notably through online citizen participation practices. Up until the Internet era, basic communication was a more complex situation than it is today. Nowadays, an ever increasing number of people are engaging in social interaction and learning through sharing knowledge and expertise on social networking sites.⁹⁶ New technology can be designed in such a way that a greater number of people could start participating in governance. Cultural changes are making it more probable that the public will become more interested in participation.⁹⁷ Education is one way through which cultural change will start occurring.

2.2.3 Civic education

“Civic education needs to be part of every child’s learning process, from early school through to higher education and beyond. If ‘reasoning from the point of view of others’ does not come naturally, it can be striven for both in play and in formal citizenship studies. Learning to place one’s own desires and interests in the context of those of others should be an essential part of every child’s education. Thinking in a way that is sensitive to others, and to the facts and future possibilities, is not an easy task and requires

⁹⁵ David Held. 2006. pp. 251

⁹⁶ Beth Simone Noveck. 2009. pp. 144

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 144

considerable mental discipline – above all, the capacity to put one’s own immediate perspective on life in critical relation to those of others.”⁹⁸

David Held in this quote brings out the importance of civic education from an early age. This echoes Schuler’s arguments about the need of nurturing civil intelligence which were discussed earlier. Kathy Sierra, continues to build on to this theory by taking it forward and suggesting that in order to promote a culture where participation in democracy and government is considered to be a form of civic duty, one has to create passion around issues in discussion.⁹⁹ When one becomes interested in a particular topic, say astronomy, one becomes more knowledgeable about the subject and eventually that particular person would start viewing the sky in a different manner. In reality the sky would not have changed, but the interested and now knowledgeable person would start viewing the sky through a different lens; Sierra refers to this lens as a ‘high resolution’ perspective.¹⁰⁰

Similarly, if citizens become sensitised or passionate about particular governmental issues, challenges or discussions, their participation would come about naturally. This would lead to the dissemination of knowledge and passion, creating a domino effect and involving more citizens in the democratic procedure. This would increase citizen collaboration and participation, and the governments’ transparency in the ways in which they operate. Governments functioning in a more transparent manner would become more accountable of their work. Increased transparency and accountable representatives

⁹⁸ David Held. 2006. pp. 251

⁹⁹ Kathy Sierra. 2010. Creating Passionate Citizens presented at the Gov 2.0 Expo, May, Washington DC. <http://www.gov2expo.com/gov2expo2010/public/schedule/detail/14898> (accessed 28 July 2011)

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

would positively affect the way in which democracies, governments, politicians and politics as a whole are viewed.

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICS 2.0 IN PRACTICE

“The advent of social media and other Web 2.0 tools has opened up tremendous new possibilities of engaging public in government work in very different ways. Further, it is changing the public’s expectations about the way government should work. For example, members of Generation Y, or the Millennial Generation, tend to expect governmental agencies to interact with them in the same way that commercial companies interact with them through various social media sites.”¹⁰¹

As discussed in Chapter Two, the call for increased openness in government is mainly built upon three main pillars: transparency, participation and collaboration. These three pillars promote accessibility to information, citizen involvement in policy making, problem solving and governing, and in turn make a government and politicians more accountable and answerable for their actions.

In this section, a detailed over view of the three corner-stone features of an ‘open government’ approach will be given. This will lead to a discussion of the predominant challenges and difficulties that the adaptation of the ‘open government’ approach might

¹⁰¹ Gwanhoo Lee and Young Hoon Kwak. 2011. *Open Government Implementation Model (OGIM): Moving to increased Public Engagement*. Using Technology Series. IBM Center for The Business of Government. pp. 9

present to governments, politicians and citizens. The progress in ‘open government’ techniques of the United States and the United Kingdom will be given in this section. These two countries may be considered to be leaders in the area, and are currently the most progressive in the field.

3.1 ‘Open government’ in practice

“Transparency is a slippery word; the kind of word that, like reform, sounds good and so ends up getting attached to any random political thing that someone wants to promote. But just as it’s silly to talk about whether “reform” is useful (it depends on the reform), talking about transparency in general won’t get us very far. Everything from holding public hearings to requiring police to videotape interrogations can be called “transparency” – there’s not much that’s useful to say about such a large category.”¹⁰²

As Aaron Swartz clearly states above, the word ‘transparency’ holds various meanings and expectations. ‘Transparency’ is considered to be a positive attribution in politics, as it encourages fairness and truth, whilst avoiding nepotism and favouritism.

Swartz’s scepticism lies in the fact that ‘open government’ promotes the publication of official public documents and government documents that are made available online for everyone to access freely, but corporate and non profit records are not made public.¹⁰³

Swartz insists that most political action takes place in informal environments and not through the formal, official and bureaucratic system. Informal meetings are usually off the

¹⁰² Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma. 2010. pp. 267

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* pp. 268

record and thus none of the agreements during these meetings are documented. This loop hole in the promotion of transparency through the ‘open government’ approach, gives leeway for corrupt practices to take place. Therefore, whilst the ‘open government’ approach seeks to promote a more transparent government, a vast number of alternative paths through which corrupt practices can occur that are not made accessible to the public, still exist.

Earlier in this study, in Chapter One, the ‘division of powers’ and the system of checks of balances developed by the French philosopher and political theorist Baron de Montesquieu, were discussed. A strong link can be made between the values that Montesquieu promoted in the 18th century, and what the advocates of ‘open government’ are promoting today. With governmental data being made public and available, another branch in the system of checks and balances is created: citizens are also being made responsible for the government’s actions. This may be considered to be a positive attribution to ‘open government’. The credibility of the government is enhanced as the government’s actions becoming transparency thus making governance more accountable. Swartz has some reservations with regards the way transparency is promoted in ‘open government’. The way that the availability of data is being promoted seems to shift the work from the government to the average citizen.¹⁰⁴ An average citizen usually does not have the time and the resources to investigate documents and any suspicious activity on his or her own. Swartz continues to substantiate this discussion by establishing the main problems he sees in this approach, whilst offering solutions to it.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 269

Swartz first solution is that by publishing information and making data public, investigation and enforcement powers are not going to be increased.¹⁰⁵ He also adds that the information that is made public is not verified and thus there is no confirmation that the material that is made available on transparency databases is not authentic.

The solution, or the alternative that Swartz offers to his criticisms of the system are to make the best use possible of the Internet: forming groups of people who work together on a common goal: “it’s through people coming together – not websites analyzing data – that real political progress can be made.”¹⁰⁶ Professor Nigel Shadbolt, when speaking about the power of government data and the work that he and others have been doing in order to see their ideas becoming a reality, during The Guardian’s Activate 2010 conference, also insists that the relevance of open data will only be felt when the available data starts being linked and structured.¹⁰⁷ These ideas can be considered to be the development of the ‘Linked Data’ theory by Sir Tim Berners-Lee. Berners-Lee speaks about the power of data when it is linked through relationships, and the way that data becomes powerful when it is strengthened through links.¹⁰⁸

The facilities provided by information and communication technology all promote social networking. This can be developed further to start a political social network: a social network that has a mission to solve the difficulties in politics. Data analysis can be really useful if it is used in order to engage a process of discovery. Swartz, insist that in order

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 269

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 271

¹⁰⁷ Nigel Shadbolt. 2010. The power of government data presented at the The Guardian’s Activate 2010. <http://data.gov.uk/resources>. (accessed 4 August 2011)

¹⁰⁸ Sir Tim Berners-Lee. 2009. What is Linked Data presented at the TED Talk, February, Long Beach California. <http://data.gov.uk/resources>. (accessed 4 August 2011)

for transparency as advocated by ‘open government’ to be achieved, it is not enough to publish the data online, on a neutral platform, but it has to be a concerted effort between technologists, journalists, politicians and citizens to bring people together to work towards a common goal: making governments more accountable.

“Transparency can be a powerful thing, but not in isolation. So, let’s stop passing the buck by saying our job is just to get the data out there and it’s other people’s job to figure out how to use it. Let’s decide that our job is to fight for good in the world. I’d love to see all these amazing resources work on that.”¹⁰⁹

Berners-Lee insists that transparency is important, but even more important than transparency is the availability of linked data.¹¹⁰ This is because linked data has value to every individual. People, who have data seem to be very keen to keep it to themselves but citizens want “Raw Data Now”.¹¹¹ Berners-Lee claims that all kind of excuses are given to citizens from governments and corporations in order to avoid sharing data, but he claims that the sharing of data will give citizens the possibility to overcome the challenges that the world is facing. The unlocking and sharing of data holds unutilised potential. Shadbolt enhances the importance of having information available to the citizens as linked-data by stating that only this can lead to having evidence based policy, and this is what drives all democratic debate.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma. 2010. pp. 272

¹¹⁰ Sir Tim Berners-Lee. 2009. What is Linked Data presented at the TED Talk, February, Long Beach California. <http://data.gov.uk/resources>. (accessed 4 August 2011)

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Nigel Shadbolt. 2010. The power of government data presented at the The Guardian’s Activate 2010. <http://data.gov.uk/resources>. (accessed 4 August 2011)

This being said about the challenges of modern democracy, and the possible solutions to these challenges through adopting an ‘open government’ approach, or Government 2.0, it is interesting to note how governments around the world feel about this new age of government.

3.1.i United States

US President Obama, committed his administration to creating a new level of openness within Government that will seek to achieve public trust based on transparency, public participation, and collaboration. “Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government.”¹¹³ Washington used to function on a culture of secrecy, where all information is locked up, taxpayer contributions are consumed without any trace, and lobbyists increase their political power.¹¹⁴ This is what the American people are experienced to. President Obama promised to change the way in which Washington functions.

President Obama showed his commitment to this change when on his first day in Office, the 21st January 2009 the President signed the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government.¹¹⁵ The Memorandum’s main aim is to “usher in a new era of open and accountable government meant to bridge the gap between the American people and their government.”¹¹⁶ The Memorandum is built upon ensuring public trust, through establishing a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Through

¹¹³ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open> (accessed 5 August 2011)

¹¹⁴ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open/about> (accessed 5 August 2011)

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

this approach, the US Government is seeking to strengthen democracy and promote an efficient and effective Government.

The Memorandum states that transparency is mandatory to ensure that US citizens have accessibility to information about what their Government is doing. The information that the Federal Government holds is a national asset. By signing this Memorandum, the Obama administration is bound to take suitable action to publish information in forms that the public easily access. Executive departments and agencies within the Government have the obligation to adopt new technologies that put information about their operations online and also get feedback from the public with regards to what information is most useful to the public.

The Government should be participatory and thus engage the public in its effectiveness, improving the quality of its decisions.¹¹⁷ The Memorandum acknowledges the fact that knowledge is widely dispersed in society and it would be to the Government's benefit to have access to society's knowledge. The Government should therefore encourage its citizens to participate in policymaking, whilst increasing and improving opportunities to participation.

Finally, the Memorandum also states that the Government should be collaborative and thus should aim at actively engaging Americans in its work. This means that cooperation between Government agencies and departments should lead to collaboration with individuals, non-profit organisations, businesses and private industry. Feedback from the public could be used to enhance the level of collaboration and increase cooperation.

¹¹⁷ http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/TransparencyandOpenGovernment/ (accessed 5 August 2011)

President Obama has campaigned for an ‘open government’ approach at the United Nations when addressing the General Assembly on September 28th 2010.¹¹⁸ Obama appealed to the countries to strengthen their governments’ openness, whilst emphasizing the importance of transparency when fighting corruption, and increasing governments’ efficiency. Obama insisted that “the strongest foundation for human progress lies in open economies, open societies, and open governments.”¹¹⁹ President Obama made it clear that the United States will be promoting and encouraging governments across the globe to take up the challenge and start adopting an openness attitude. Nevertheless the President also insisted that “The ultimate success of democracy in the world won’t come because the United States dictates it; it will come because individual citizens demand a say in how they are governed.”¹²⁰ This Memorandum holds all the principles that have been discussed earlier by Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Nigel Shadblot. The US Government has started to make government data available in a linked manner.

“Data.gov starts an exciting new chapter in its evolution to make government data more accessible and usable than ever before. The data catalog website that broke new grounds just two years ago, is once again redefining the Open Data experience.”¹²¹

Data.gov has the purpose “to increase public access to high value, machine readable datasets generated by the Executive Branch of the Federal Government.”¹²² This website

¹¹⁸ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/09/23/remarks-president-united-nations-general-assembly> (accessed 5 August 2011)

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ <http://explore.data.gov/>. (accessed 10 August 2011)

¹²² <http://www.data.gov/about>. (accessed 10 August 2011)

gives the public the ability to easily find, download, and use dataset that the Federal Government holds. The website is designed in such a way that provides information and descriptions on how to access the data available. The success of Data.gov depends on the level of public participation and collaboration. The public is given the opportunity to participate in government by contributing to the building of application, conducting analyses, and perform research. Improvement to the way that Data.gov functions is based on the feedback, comments and recommendations generated from the public. This calls for commitment and response from citizens, through providing suggestions on what would make the site a better and improved one. The main aim of Data.gov is to promote and practice unprecedented openness, that will strengthen the United States' "democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government."¹²³

In a blog post on The White House Blog, Vivek Kundra, the U.S. Chief Information Officer, announced that two years after the launch of Data.gov, from 47 datasets available, the number increased to 389,681 datasets. These available sets of information cover every aspect of government operations, from health care data to public safety information.¹²⁴ Real-time updating of the data on Data.gov, took the practicality and convenience of the data providing site to another level. After the earthquake that hit Japan and caused radiation leakages, Data.gov provided real-time alerts and data related to the radiation levels in the United States. This gave American citizens the possibility to

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Vivek Kundra. 2011. From Data to Apps: Putting Government Information to Work for You. *The White House Blog*. May 20. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2011/05/20/data-apps-putting-government-information-work-you>. (accessed 10 August 2011)

monitor the fluctuations in radiation levels as a result of the melt down in the Fukushima Nuclear Plant.¹²⁵

Data.gov gives citizens the opportunity to contribute to its datasets by creating and modifying its available applications. This gives rise to the creating of innovative applications, which help with the increase in efficiency and cutting down of wasteful government spending. By tapping into the society's expertise, government can start doing more for less, as the mobilization of citizen-developments and the leveraging of Data.gov has started providing more resources.

3.1.ii United Kingdom

David Cameron, Britain's current Prime Minister, has been an advocate of an 'open government' even before being elected. During a TED Talk that Cameron gave in February 2010, he made the argument that if the right political philosophy is combined with the incredible information revolution that has and still is taking place, there is an opportunity to remake politics, government and public service, thus achieve improved well being for all.¹²⁶

Cameron focuses on the importance of giving power to the people, control over their lives and choice.¹²⁷ This, he says, will achieve a stronger and better society. In return, this, coupled with the abundance of information that is available politics, government and public service have the potential to be remade. Another important feature of the sharing

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ David Cameron. 2010. The next age of government presented at the TED Talk, February, London. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ELnyoso6vI>. (accessed 5 August 2011)

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

of data is through understanding people and trying to treat people the way they really are, and not the way that politicians would like people to be.

Cameron emphasises the importance of the timing at which the notion of ‘open government’ and the sharing of data is becoming important.¹²⁸ He refers to the contemporary age as the post-bureaucratic age, which follows the pre-bureaucratic age, when the running of a country was held at a local level, and the bureaucratic age, when power was held at a central level. With the advent of the information revolution, the post-bureaucratic age gives power to every individual. Cameron compares these stages to different forms of control: world of local control, central control and finally the contemporary stage of control, people control. In a post-bureaucratic age, it is possible to have people in control. This is as a result of the information and communication revolution.

Cameron talks about the ways in which the Internet and accessibility to information has changed the ways in which we live, we do business, we travel, we communicate and we shop, amongst others. However, it does not seem that government has been touched by this change yet. Cameron identifies three ways in which government can change: through transparency, choice and accountability.¹²⁹

With regards transparency, Cameron discusses the benefits of having all the governmental contracts and their bidding process online. The availability of such information would increase competitiveness. The commercial world, he says, is light years ahead of the government when making use of the available information and

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

communication technology. Greater transparency would increase the wellbeing and value for money.¹³⁰ Choice is not currently available in public services, for example health services, policing and education. The information about the provision of services should be made available online and not remain locked in a government department. This gives citizens the opportunity to analyse, compare and contrast the different services available and make an informed choice. With regards accountability, Cameron expresses great expectations. This he says, will change the way that governments function, this is because people will start having the opportunity to hold the authorities accountable for their actions.

Cameron emphasises the importance of understanding the way that people think and act. Having this information about people's behaviour, would allow for the development of effective methods through which messages are channelled.

Through an 'open government', Cameron insists that the noble sentiments that J.F. Kennedy made infamous by his phrase "Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" will be made easier to achieve by a vast majority of citizens.¹³¹ When J. F. Kennedy said these words, one could fight and die for one's country, one could serve in the civil service, but one could not have the necessary information to work on building a strong society, as one has now.

Cameron speaks about how there is much more to life than money and more that we should try to measure than money. This sentiment is perfectly encapsulated in a speech by Robert Kennedy, where he says:

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

“The gross national product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”¹³²

With the huge advances in information technology, with the massive changes in behavioural economics, and with all that we know how well being can be improved, the dream envisaged by Robert Kennedy has the potential of becoming a reality.¹³³

When elected Prime Minister Cameron made Government’s Transparency one of his top priorities in his mandate.¹³⁴ By making data easily accessible, people will get the opportunity to make decisions and suggestions about government policies. Through a purposely developed website, data.gov.uk, public data and governmental processes are brought together in one searchable website.¹³⁵

In a video presentation on data.gov.uk, Cameron refers to the publication of government data as a land mark event.¹³⁶ The Prime Minister commits his Government to being transparent in what it does and what it spends. These plans are transformative, both for the Government and for its citizens. Every department and agency in the British

¹³² <http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Ready-Reference/RFK-Speeches/Remarks-of-Robert-F-Kennedy-at-the-University-of-Kansas-March-18-1968.aspx> (accessed 8 August 2011)

¹³³ David Cameron. 2010. The next age of government presented at the TED Talk, February, London. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ELnyoso6vI>. (accessed 5 August 2011)

¹³⁴ <http://data.gov.uk/about> (accessed 8 August 2011)

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ David Cameron. *Transparency*. <http://data.gov.uk/about> (accessed 8 August 2011)

Government started publishing and updating every month every item of spending over 25,000 Pounds.¹³⁷ This will give citizens the opportunity to have access to the Government's spending, and they will have to opportunity to flag any waste or inefficiency that they notice. A democracy that allows its citizens to know what the Government is doing, allows them to hold it accountable for what it is doing and the outcome it is producing, is what a modern democracy should look like.¹³⁸ The very way that this new approach to governance is promoted, suggests that a fourth branch in the system of checks and balances is added to Montesquieu's separation of powers: 'people control'. The opportunities that data.gov.uk brings about to citizens can be also considered to bring about obligations: namely the obligation to review the data available and hold the government accountable for its actions. Now that the data is available and citizens are no longer in the dark with regards how their taxes are being spent, there seems to be an automatic obligation that they should start monitoring the spending. Indirectly, this increases the citizens' participation in governance, and also creates responsibility amongst the citizens, that will in turn increase a civic sense in the society. Built upon the Power of Information Taskforce Report, data.gov.uk aims at giving a way into the wealth of government data.¹³⁹ Data on this website is easy to find, easy to license and easy to re-use.¹⁴⁰ An interesting feature of the website that promotes participation is the ways in which it suggests and encourages citizens to get involved in the whole project. The 'Ideas page', encourages people to give in suggestions on what should be

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100413152047/http://poit.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/poit/>. (accessed 11 August 2011)

¹⁴⁰ <http://data.gov.uk/project>. (accessed 11 August 2011)

built in as an application.¹⁴¹ An example of a suggestion that was posted in by an Anonymous citizen is to develop “A map that shows for any given point the ease of travel by public transport to that point.”¹⁴² Citizens are also encouraged to contribute by sharing any Applications that they would have built with the data made available. Such an Application is UK Pharmacy: it can be used to search for a pharmacy/chemist around your location.¹⁴³ Data.gov.uk also encourages citizens to give in suggestions on how the site could be improved and better ways in which data is displayed.

Another initiative taken by the British Government is Directgov: Public services all in one place. Directgov, which is accessible online (www.direct.gov.uk) is the UK Government’s digital service for its citizens. This website delivers information and practical advice about public services, bringing them all together in one place in the simplest way possible. It provides information about all the services the government offers, from booking a driving test, to finding local NHS services.¹⁴⁴ The way that the information is presented, and made accessible to all in a simple manner, parallels what Berners-Lee and Shadblot suggest that governments should aim at achieving. It is interesting to note that this service, is a successful one as the website gets over 26 million visits a month, with the latest statistics showing that 29,390,374 individuals visited the website during July 2011.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ <http://data.gov.uk/ideas>. (accessed 11 August 2011)

¹⁴² <http://data.gov.uk/ideas/map-shows-any-given-point-ease-travel-public-transport-point>. (accessed 11 August 2011)

¹⁴³ <http://data.gov.uk/apps/uk-pharmacy>. (accessed 11 August 2011)

¹⁴⁴ http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/SiteInformation/DG_4004497. (accessed 8 August 2011)

¹⁴⁵ http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/SiteInformation/DG_10036216. (accessed 8 August 2011)

3.2 Global movement for ‘Open Government’

3.2.i Open Government Partnership

Kundra claims that Data.gov has started a global movement, as new open data platforms are being established in a number of nations, states, cities and international organizations. It is predicted that with the improvements and changes that are expected to happen in the available applications based on the Data.gov platform, dramatic changes to the current thinking and expectations on how we acquire solutions and the way we deliver services to citizens will happen.

On the Open Government Initiative Blog, Aneesh Chopre, the U.S. Chief Technology officer, and Cass Sunstein, the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, write that the commitment shown towards ‘open government’ by the US Government has encouraged a wide range of initiatives, not only on a national level but also on an international level. “Most recently, the United States has worked with many other nations to create an Open Government Partnership that will promote that commitment around the world.”¹⁴⁶

United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has recently announced that in September 2011, a multi-national ‘Open Government Partnership’ will be officially launched.¹⁴⁷ During the launch, Secretary Clinton stated that “this new global effort to improve governance, accelerate economic growth, and empower citizens worldwide is exactly

¹⁴⁶ Aneesh Chopra and Cass Sunstein. 2011. Open Government and the National Plan. *Open Government Initiative Blog*. August 8. <http://www.transparency-initiative.org/news/open-government-and-the-national-plan> (accessed 10 August 2011)

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

what we should all be doing together in the 21st century.”¹⁴⁸ The Open Government Partnership is an international initiative that aims at securing tangible commitments from governments to “promote transparency, increase civic participation, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to make government more open, effective, and accountable.”¹⁴⁹ The Open Government Partnership is lead by a multi-stakeholder International Steering Committee that includes the following governments: Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Philippines, South Africa, United Kingdom and the United States.¹⁵⁰ The co-chairs of the International Steering Committee are the United States and Brazil in its inaugural year, and is made up of government and civil society representatives from all over the world. This Partnership is a vehicle to strengthen democracy and human rights, fight corruption, empower citizens worldwide, enhance economic growth and harness technology and innovation to transform governance in the 21st century.¹⁵¹

“The Open Government Partnership complements this work by representing a new global effort to do exactly that: promote transparency, fight corruption, and energize civic engagement. This is a partnership on three levels. First, it is a partnership among governments. We all face common challenges. We have a great deal to learn from each other, and so this is a two-way conversation where we are all sharing ideas and learning. Second, it is a

¹⁴⁸ Hillary Clinton. 2011. State Department, USA, July 12. <http://www.state.gov/g/ogp/>. (accessed 10 August 2011)

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/>. (accessed 10 August 2011)

¹⁵¹ <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about/>. (accessed 10 August 2011)

partnership with civil society. And third, it is a partnership with the private sector."¹⁵²

3.2.ii Digital Agenda for Europe 2010-2020

In a White Paper on European Governance, dated 2001, the European Commission outlined a major challenge that governments all over Europe were facing at the start of the 21st Century. "On the one hand, Europeans wanted them [political leaders and governments] to find solutions to the major problems confronting our societies. On the other hand, people increasingly distrust institutions and politics or are simply not interested in them."¹⁵³ One of the proposals for change that this White Paper brings forward is: Better involvement and more openness.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Principles of Good Governance suggested were: Openness, Participation, Accountability, Effectiveness and Coherence. Information and communication technologies were identified as having the most important role in delivering good governance to European citizens.

Ten years on, e-Government is considered to be highly significant in all the European Union Member States, and have become a reality for millions of citizens. In May 2010, the European Commission issued its Digital Agenda for Europe.¹⁵⁵ This agenda places

¹⁵² Hillary Clinton. 2011. State Department, USA, July 12. <http://www.state.gov/g/ogp/>. (accessed 10 August 2011)

¹⁵³ http://ec.europa.eu/governance/white_paper/en.pdf. (accessed 11 August 2011)

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/egovernment/policy/index_en.htm. (accessed 11 August 2011)

information and communication technology at the very heart of government processes. It seeks to ensure effectiveness and delivery of governmental services to the citizens.

The Commission outlines the drastic cost cuts that e-Government brings about to the costs of public services.¹⁵⁶ Public services are made more efficient and easier to use and access for citizens, business and governments. Citizen participation and collaboration with the government will increase as a result of better provision of government services.

In 2010 the European Commission launched its Digital Agenda for Europe. The Digital Agenda is one of the flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy.¹⁵⁷ Action 3 in the Digital Agenda focuses on opening up public data resources for re-use. The main aim is to make public data available to businesses and citizens so that the data can be used in innovative and efficient ways. Emphasis is put on the fact that the availability of previously inaccessible data brings about innovative initiatives that will contribute to the European economy.

3.3 Conclusion

“The traditional link between the public and policy making has been the voting booth. But that once-a year process is severely anemic; it deprives government of all that citizens have to offer and strips citizenship of the robust opportunities for greater participation and engagement. While we have ballot measures and referenda, these direct democratic measures allow for

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0245:FIN:EN:PDE>. (accessed 11 August 2011)

only a thumbs-up or thumbs-down vote. And deliberation limits involvement to only talk. Ordinary citizens have more to offer than voting or talking. They can contribute their expertise and, in so doing, realize the opportunity now to be powerful. The official no longer needs to be the sole decision maker. Instead, new technology can help bridge the chasm between public participation and public policy in issues ranging from climate change to patents. Collaborative governance is an idea whose time has come.”¹⁵⁸

In this chapter, concrete examples of ‘open government’ initiatives that are currently being taken by the United States, the United Kingdom, the Open Government Partnership and the European Union were analysed. Although sometimes deferring in nature, the policy behind the various initiatives is consistent: promoting an ‘open government’ approach to governance and democracy. The policies that have been discussed are consistent with the democratic principles that have been discussed in detail in Chapter One. The basic and fundamental principles of transparency, collaboration, participation and accountability that were the basis of Ancient Greek democracy, can be considered to have reached their optimum expression in the contemporary world, following the advent of the information and communication revolution.

Having said this, there are difficulties that this process is facing and will have to overcome. The next chapter will deal with the challenges and some of issues that applying an ‘open government’ approach will bring about.

¹⁵⁸ Beth Simone Noveck. 2009. pp. 190

CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGES OF THE ‘OPEN GOVERNMENT’ APPROACH

“As the amount and complexity of information increase, it becomes the responsibility of government to not only allow access to information, but also provide tools that enable the public to effectively search, analyze, and understand the information.

This is not an argument for simply throwing open the doors on new media tools. We all know there is a big difference between answering question in an online town hall and delivering transparency via meaningful government data on the Internet. We are striving for the latter.”¹⁵⁹

Adopting an ‘open government’ approach as presented and discussed in the previous chapters is not the easiest of tasks. This is namely because, this change in governance will call for a cultural change in politics, in journalism, in the expectations that citizens have of their government and the way that civil service operates, amongst others. This section will go into the numerous challenges that governments have to overcome when adopting an ‘open government’ approach on a long term basis.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma, eds. 2010. pp. 294

4.1 Changes in the ways in which journalism is conducted and in the role of citizens in society

With all the data becoming available, the society will suddenly become inundated with a vast amount of information that before was not readily available. As things stood before the advent of 'open government' only the leaked data that flagged or confirmed corruption made the news, as it was the only data that either journalists managed to access through some leak of information from the government. What is being proposed now is that all the data from all the government agencies is made public. The question is, will the important and relevant information that usually is what flags corrupt or unorthodox acts, be lost amidst the vast amount of data that is being made public? Take the United Kingdom's example of data.gov.uk. One of the site's purposes is to make all public contracts over 25,000 Pounds public. Is it going to be possible for citizens, journalists, and the media, to go through that vast amount of information and draw attention to the documents that are evidence of dishonest and corrupt actions? This new reality calls for investigative journalism and active citizenship that would ensure that the new data accessible is scrutinised.

4.2 Changes needed in the civil service in order to ensure an efficient service

Another challenge which may be considered to be an organisational challenge is the lack of human resources and expertise to deliver and implement 'open government' initiatives within government agencies. Financial resources are also an issue during a period where governments around the world are cutting down on their spending. The implementation

of ‘open government’ might deceptively seem to require very little resources, but in reality research shows that a significant amount of investment and funding is needed.¹⁶⁰

The whole process is also considerably time consuming. It is not possible to develop and maintain the new services without the adequate funding, continuous research and development of new tools, human resources and expertise.

A change that has to occur in order for ‘open government’ to be adopted successfully is a change in the public service organisational culture. The typical culture in a governmental agency is a bureaucratic one, characterised by hierarchical organigrams, in which a top-bottom approach is adopted. The first change has to occur within the government agencies and departments themselves. A culture of transparency and openness has to first be harvested within the governmental structures in order to ensure that it is reflected in the ‘open government’ approach. The transition that ‘open government’ calls for is a drastic one as it requires the adaptation of a new culture of transparency and an atmosphere that promotes government openness. The crucial point on which a government which advocates open governance should be judged upon is the effort, or lack thereof, to create and endorse an openness outlook throughout the government structures.¹⁶¹ This outlook should be encouraged in a holistic manner through which the government workforce engages and practices the openness approach in their daily work. The sufficient training should be given to government employees, in order for them to

¹⁶⁰ Gwanhoo Lee and Young Hoon Kwak. 2011. *Open Government Implementation Model (OGIM): Moving to increased Public Engagement*. Using Technology Series. IBM Center for The Business of Government. pp. 24 <http://www.crowdsourcing.org/document/an-open-government-implementation-model-moving-to-increased-public-engagement/3060>. (accessed 12 August 2011)

¹⁶¹ Daniel Lathrop & Laurel Ruma, eds. 2010. pp. 296

fully understand the benefits of transparency and to support and strengthen the newly adopted attitude.¹⁶²

In the report ‘Open Government Implementation Model (OGIM): Moving to increased Public Engagement’, emphasis is made on the importance to ensure the quality of the data that is made public.¹⁶³ All agencies and departments must guarantee that the data that is published is accurate, consistent, usable and useful. Moreover, timely publication of the data is of utmost importance.¹⁶⁴ “To do so, agencies need to put formal processes in place to govern the lifecycle of identifying, collecting, and sharing of data.”¹⁶⁵

The maximum and optimum use of new media and social networks is recommended to be the tools through which data is published and communicated to the public. The relevance of the whole ‘open government’ approach lies on its authenticity and the way it is delivered, therefore, assurance of the quality and accuracy of the data is crucial.

It is also of extreme importance that the sites on which data is published, and through which citizens collaborate and participate in governance are monitored regularly. This is because, at times, some would take the opportunity offered by ‘open government’ to ulterior motives and write comments that are inappropriate, offensive or off-topic.¹⁶⁶ This calls for constant monitoring from the agencies and government departments. This is also to be considered as an added cost to the operational costs of the agencies and departments.

Human resources and financial support are a must to ensure the service is kept updated

¹⁶² *Ibid.* pp. 296

¹⁶³ Gwanhoo Lee and Young Hoon Kwak. 2011. pp. 24 <http://www.crowdsourcing.org/document/an-open-government-implementation-model-moving-to-increased-public-engagement/3060>. (accessed 12 August 2011)

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 24

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 24

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 25

and to ensure that the content of the public comments is relevant. This having been said, a balance between the autonomy of the sites and their control has got to be reached in order to ensure that public engagement is kept in line, but at the same time it is kept alive and continuously enhanced. If control over public participation is considered by the public to be too restrictive, citizen participation would decrease, thus the very purposes of ‘open government’, namely collaboration and participation, are not attended to.

In order for ‘open government’ to be successful, public engagement, collaboration and participation have to be ensured. The lack of public interest is a challenge that the government has to overcome when the ‘open government’ approach is introduced. Online, there are an endless number of websites and social networking sites available for the public. Government sites are going to have to compete with the available websites. The challenge to overcome all the online traffic and to gain significance in the publics’ lives is one major challenge that governments will be facing. A government adopting an ‘open government’ approach does not only want citizens to follow its updates online, but it needs its citizens to engage in governance. Having the websites as interactive as possible and continuous updating is essential to get the public to engage in the ‘open government’ project.

4.3 Change in the political culture to become more collaborative and participatory

A significant importance lies in the way that ‘open government’ is introduced and developed. The philosophy behind an ‘open government’ itself presents a change in political culture. The vast majority of citizens are not typically used to having information

readily available; they are not used to having the possibility to give their opinion, and collaborating with the government. This therefore calls for a change in mentality and a greater sense of citizenship from the citizens' part. A gradual introduction of 'open government' would make this transition move in a smoother way, whilst giving citizens time to become an integral part of the whole process.

It is also crucial that citizens feel that the technological infrastructure is safe and secure, and can ensure that their identity and personal information is not in jeopardy. If the public feels that there is the risk of personal information being leaked or that confidential information might be disclosed, then the whole project would not be popular and citizens would most probably feel vulnerable or intimidated and would not contribute and participate in governance. "Information security and privacy issues can be major issues for certain application and initiatives because risks can be perceived to outweigh potential benefits."¹⁶⁷

4.4 Change in the openness policy in relation to security issues

When discussing the challenges that adopting an 'open government' approach entails, a crucial dilemma that should be discussed is the fine line that there exists between transparency and openness, and national security, defence and international relations. A fine balance between government transparency and national security has to be reached. This might be considered to be the most challenging difficulty that governments are currently facing. This is because one might say that governments are being selective in

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 26

which areas openness is to be adopted. This brings about discrepancies in the ways in which governments operate and as a result the credibility and thrust built through the ‘open government’ approach is put into jeopardy. The challenge for governments is therefore to understand that the openness approach is adopted by individuals and organisations that will scrutinise its work.

An issue that the information and communication revolution has brought about is that data can be leaked through the hacking of networks. “The rise of ‘hacktivism’, which involves groups of hackers not necessarily driven by financial gain (though this can be a handy by-product of their nefarious activities), poses a growing challenge to companies and governments. Often the motive is revenge.”¹⁶⁸ For instance, Google has recently revealed that it was victim of a cyber attack that originated from China.¹⁶⁹ In this cyber attack an attempt at retrieving Gmail passwords from American officials, journalists and Chinese political activists was made.¹⁷⁰ This is one example of the possible ways in which data can be accessed and distributed. The sharing of confidential information is easily done digitally, thus giving everybody the accessibility to sensitive documentation and information.

The controversial leaking of sensitive documentation by WikiLeaks, has initiated an international discussion on what is to be kept confidential and what is to be made public. Julian Assange, the editor in chief of WikiLeaks, insists that his organisation has “coined

¹⁶⁸ The Economist. 2011. “Once more unto the breach”, June 3, sec. Science and Technology. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/babbage/2011/06/internet-insecurity>. (accessed 17 August 2011)

¹⁶⁹ Sui-Lee Wee and Alexei Oreskovic. 2011. “Google reveals Gmail hacking, says likely from China.” *Reuters.com*, June 2. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/02/us-google-hacking-idUSTRE7506U320110602>. (accessed 17 August 2011)

¹⁷⁰ The Economist. 2011. “Once more unto the breach”, June 3, sec. Science and Technology. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/babbage/2011/06/internet-insecurity>. (accessed 17 August 2011)

a new type of journalism: scientific journalism.”¹⁷¹ Assange insists that democratic societies need a strong media to ensure that the government is operating in an honest and credible manner. He identifies WikiLeaks as part of this media whilst substantiating his argument by mentioning the crude facts about the Iraq and Afgan wars, and corrupt practices that were exposed by Wikileaks in recent years.¹⁷²

WikiLeaks’ role as a media organisation is not only to inform the public but to prove that the news is true. “Scientific journalism allows you to read a news story, then to click online to see the original document it is based on.”¹⁷³ WikiLeaks is not the only organisation that is embarking on this new form of journalism.¹⁷⁴ Non-governmental organisations, such as Amnesty International, Medecins Sans Frontieres, and Human Rights Watch, are investing in creating their news units, as through their own investigations they can spread information through information and communication technologies.¹⁷⁵ Before the digital revolution, in order to raise awareness, spread information, and promote openness, such NGOs had to work closely with media organisations, and the media could take the decision whether to publish their stories or not. Thanks to the Internet, these organisations can now public their research, findings and material independently. The division between activism and journalism was never that

¹⁷¹ Julian Assange. 2010. “Don’t shoot messenger for revealing uncomfortable truths.” *The Australian*, December 8. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/wikileaks/dont-shoot-messenger-for-revealing-uncomfortable-truths/story-fn775xjq-1225967241332>. (accessed 16 August 2011)

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ The Economist. 2011. “WikiLeaks and other newcomers: Julian Assange and the new wave”, July 7. <http://www.economist.com/node/18904166>. (accessed 16 August 2011)

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

clear, nevertheless, in the digital age, with the advent of the information and technological revolution it has become even more ambiguous.”¹⁷⁶

*“As international reaction testifies, the repercussions of Cablegate are massive. Wikileaks is changing the world without invitation, and the political establishment does not approve. A global witch-hunt for Julian Assange, Wikileaks’ co-founder and figure head, is now in full swing. Assange should be “hunted” and “executed” say prominent American politicians, who want him extradited and charged under the country’s 1917 Espionage Act, a law introduced to combat socialists and pacifists during the Red Scare. “Obama should put out a contract [to have Assagne assassinated] and maybe use a drone or something,” said Professor Tom Flanagan, a former advisor to Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. While in France, the birthplace of the Enlightenment, Wikileaks was described as a “threat to democracy”.*¹⁷⁷

Assange’s work as a scientific journalist is not held in high regard by a number of people. Assange claims that the organisation and himself, have had to face vicious attacks and accusations from the US government, whilst he has been personally accused with treason.¹⁷⁸ Critics of WikiLeaks say that diplomatic documents and cables should be kept

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ Ryan Gallagher. 2010. Wikileaks: the truth is not treason. Article. *openDemocracy*. December 3. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/ryan-gallagher/wikileaks-truth-is-not-treason>. (accessed 2 August 2011)

¹⁷⁸ Julian Assange. 2010. “Don’t shoot messenger for revealing uncomfortable truths.” *The Australian*, December 8. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/in-depth/wikileaks/dont-shoot-messenger-for-revealing-uncomfortable-truths/story-fn775xjq-1225967241332>. (accessed 16 August 2011)

in confidence, whilst Assange refers to these kept ‘secrets’ as being government corruption.¹⁷⁹

The reactions that politicians have had towards the publication of certain documents by WikiLeaks varied, but were consistently cautious with regards what they said. David Cameron, condemned WikiLeaks’ publications, as the information released was classified, and its publication was a breach of confidential relationships that would have been built over the years.¹⁸⁰ Some, such as, Ryan Gallagher, a British freelance journalist, find this attitude adopted by the politicians not in line with their positions on transparency and ‘open government’. Gallagher points out that WikiLeaks is not just an organisation that publicises stories and documents that are considered to be sensitive, but it is an idea, and as civil rights activist Medgar Evers puts it “You can kill a man but you can’t kill an idea”.¹⁸¹

Gallagher insists that “an idea is precisely what WikiLeaks has become”, an idea that promotes the expression of democratic ideals that has materialised thanks to the advent of technology.¹⁸² This has created a new reality in which all traditions are challenged and confronted.

WikiLeaks and Assange have faced difficulties and will most probably continue to be persecuted for their actions, but other media outlets are investing in approaches similar to

¹⁷⁹ Ryan Gallagher. 2010. Wikileaks: the truth is not treason. Article. *openDemocracy*. December 3. <http://www.opendemocracy.net/ourkingdom/ryan-gallagher/wikileaks-truth-is-not-treasure>. (accessed 16 August 2011)

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

that adopted by WikiLeaks.¹⁸³ For example, Al Jazeera has set its own ‘Transparency Unit’ that gives the public the opportunity to submit any information, from breaching of human rights to official corporate corruption, in an anonymous manner.¹⁸⁴ The Wall Street Journal, launched its own ‘Safe House’. The appeals on the website www.wsjsafehouse.com call for the participation of the general public by sending in any newsworthy information that they might have.¹⁸⁵

The issue that governments face with regards the diffusion of confidential information that mainly deals with national security, defence and international relations is not WikiLeaks in itself. WikiLeaks is the medium through which ‘secret’ documents have been and are still being leaked. This does not make WikiLeaks the only medium through which such documents and information is made public. Technologically capable people, hackers, media networks, or journalists, amongst others have their own ways and means to get to the documents themselves and publish them anyway. WikiLeaks is essentially just a platform; it is the organisation that publishes the classified material that it receives, whilst protecting the identity of its informants. This takes the debate to another issue which currently seems to be a grey and unexplored area; the amount of documents that are considered to be highly confidential seems to be an exorbitant one, but in reality some seem to lack in substance. In a video clip by the European Parliament, Benoit Thieulin, CEO of Netscouade, an internet agency, insists that the most important issue that WikiLeaks has brought to the forefront is the way that foreign policy is handled by

¹⁸³ The Economist. 2011. “WikiLeaks and other newcomers: Julian Assange and the new wave”, July 7. <http://www.economist.com/node/18904166>. (accessed 16 August 2011)

¹⁸⁴ <http://transparency.aljazeera.net/>. (accessed 17 August 2011)

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.wsjsafehouse.com/> (accessed 17 August 2011)

governments. Thieulin insists that through WikiLeaks, it has been made clear that the internet is calling for transparency at all levels. Had diplomats been more cautious in the ways in which they labelled and stamped their documents, the actual ‘defence secrets’ or ‘confidential’ documents would have probably remained confidential.¹⁸⁶ This boils down to the accountability of diplomats themselves.

Arguably, the real debate that WikiLeaks has started is about what needs to be done by states in order to secure their classified information that would really have dangerous consequences if made public, whilst gaining credibility amongst its citizens by making all other information public.

The Internet is a resourceful platform through which users with similar political interests are able to find other individuals who share their own interests. The communication medium in itself feeds a lot of passions and gives the opportunity to all those who have the initiative to work on what they believe in whilst ensuring their security and protecting anyone who providing the information.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter it is made clear that it is of utmost importance that governments are consistently in line with their openness approach, as ‘selective openness’ would only bring about more scepticism about their actions. Although national security, defence and

¹⁸⁶ europartv. 2011. *Social Media*. Brussels, March 18.
<http://www.europartv.europa.eu/en/player.aspx?pid=abc78349-d8ae-46d6-bee8-9eaa00a64517>. (accessed 23 August 2011)

international relations issues that might put individuals at risk if they are exposed, should be kept confidential, other issues which deal with violation of human rights, corruption and other discrepancies in the governments' actions should be not be kept secret from the general public. On the contrary, I believe that if the governments are open and honest about their mistakes or shortcomings, they would become more credible. This would also improve the efficiency and performance of the civil service, as if any form of underperformance, corruption or fraud is reported, the civil servants are the ones who have to bear the responsibility of their actions and not the government as an institution. Governance becomes a shared responsibility towards which all have the opportunity to contribute. This might be one effective way through which the contemporary sceptical attitude is decreased.

CHAPTER FIVE

MALTA: A CASE STUDY

This section will be dedicated to a case-study of Malta's current state of play and its prospects when it comes to the future of e-Government, citizen participation and collaboration and the implementation of an 'open government' approach. In order to fully understand the development of e-Government and the future plans of open governance, one needs to have a basic understanding of the Maltese political scenario, general practices in Maltese politics, the expectations Maltese citizens have of their government and the political culture of the islands. The policies and targets developed by the Maltese government and the response of the citizens will then be discussed. As previously considered, the 'open government' approach is not just a policy that can be implemented overnight. It is a revolutionary change, as it promotes a change in governance itself as well as a change in citizens' participation and collaboration in the whole process. The challenges that this change will bring about, and also its benefits to the Maltese Government and society will be discussed.

5.1 Political and cultural background

Traditionally, Maltese citizens tend to be active members in society. Evidence of this is the fact that voter turnout in Malta is very high when compared to other Western

democracies. In fact, the voter turnout exceeds 90% of the registered voters in general elections.¹⁸⁷ The participation in local council elections and elections for members of the European Parliament, are still high when compared to other European democracies, even though it is considerably lower than the turnouts recorded in general elections.¹⁸⁸ Even though the voter turnout decreases in such second-order elections, such decrease is in itself a way for the electorate to express itself as the lower turnout is often a reflection of dissatisfaction with the Government's performance.¹⁸⁹

This leads to the conclusion that the Maltese electorate's most evident way of expressing its sentiment towards the administration is through its different voting patterns in the first-order elections and the second-order elections. It would be interesting to analyse if the pattern that has been followed up till now in first and second-order elections will continue to be followed should more opportunities through which the electorate can express its dissatisfaction and disappointment with the government become available.

Before making any predictions or speculations on how the introduction of an 'open government' approach will change the voting patterns of the Maltese electorate, it would be fitting to understand what changes a more transparent, accountable and open government would bring about in Maltese politics and in the electorate's participation.

Contemporary Maltese politics is based on a bi-party system, the Labour Party and the Nationalist Party, with a third party, Alternattiva Demokratika, which to date has not

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.maltadata.com/tr-turnout1.htm>. (accessed 22 August 2011)

¹⁸⁸ Ylenia Caruana. 2010. The European Elections in Malta: Are they a case of second-order elections? B. Euro (Hons), Malta: University of Malta, May.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

been elected in the Maltese Parliament. The two main parties in Malta function in a highly coordinated manner. Given the size of the country and the closely knit society, the parties have managed to establish a detailed database of all the electorate, which database includes records of those who entered the polling booths, those who did not vote, and those who did not collect their voting document.¹⁹⁰ More information such as the traditional family political affiliations or sympathies is also usually recorded. This detailed and sophisticated procedure is easily coordinated in a small country where political participation and interest is relatively high and where people know each other's political preference.

The voting turnout described above represent the few official and direct opportunities Maltese citizens have to express their sentiment in an official and recorded manner. On the other hand, Maltese citizens often have the opportunity to express their sentiment in an informal context. In fact, most citizens have a personal connection with at least one local politician. This grants the Maltese electorate access to its representatives in Parliament. This may be considered to be positive as it provides an informal channel through which the Maltese public can participate in governance. On the other hand, since these relationships are based on informal meetings and settings, and one will have access to politicians according to his or her casual relationship with them, there is a possibility that not only hear say about possible corrupt practices arise, but also opportunities for corrupt actions increase.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Corruption allegations and conspiracy theories about unorthodox practices within the Government are ongoing. As a direct effect of this, Maltese citizens have increasingly become more demanding in the effective provision of public services and transparency within public institutions.¹⁹¹

The call for more transparency and Government accountability has become more and more evident in the past few years, since social media gained popularity. The latest report on e-Government issued by the Malta Information Technology Agency (MITA) states that around 40% of the Maltese population is on Facebook.¹⁹² Facebook, can be considered to be a virtual replica of a typical Maltese village square, where people meet up, share information and gossip. The difference is that the information is not only shared between those few people physically present in the square, but is shared with thousands of people who can access the information at any time and from any place. This I believe has created a more demanding society that demands real time response to its questions, its difficulties and clarification of facts. In this reality, the Government does not afford to work behind closed doors any more. Its citizens are requesting information, constant interactive communication, and opportunities to collaborate and participate in governance.

5.2 Malta's policy on e-Government and 'open government'

¹⁹¹ Austin Gatt. 2009. An e-Participatory framework for Malta. In EuroSpace S.r.l., pp. 90

¹⁹² Malta Information Technology Agency. *eGov Online Surveys July 2010 - January 2011*. pp. 2
<https://mygov.mt/notify/Mita%20eGov%20Online%20Surveys%202010.pdf> (accessed 23 August 2011)

In view of this new reality, the current Government administration immediately upon being elected in March 2008, made the first efforts to introduce “citizen empowerment and involvement”.¹⁹³ The primary step was the appointment in Cabinet of a Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information.¹⁹⁴ The main purpose of the setting up of this new role in the Government Administration is to launch a series of official consultation channels and processes on a number of different policy making initiatives. The aim is to consult a wide spectrum of citizens on various issues.

As part of its plan the Secretariat strengthened the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD), which acts as an advisory council that offers consultancy to the Maltese Government on economic and social relevance matters.¹⁹⁵ The Malta-EU Action Steering and Action Committee (MEUSAC) was also re-established as part of the consultation plan of the Government.¹⁹⁶ MEUSAC was primarily established to assist the Government in Malta’s accession process to European membership, but now its main three areas of interest are consultation, information and support on the EU Programmes and Funds.¹⁹⁷

The Parliamentary Secretary for Public Dialogue and Information is committed to enhance public dialogue and customer care. The website www.servizz.gov.mt gives citizens the opportunity to send in requests for information, queries or difficulties, and

¹⁹³ Austin Gatt. 2009. pp. 90

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 90

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.mcesd.org.mt/mcesd/content.aspx?id=101553> (accessed 23 August 2011)

¹⁹⁶ <http://www.meusac.gov.mt/fme/294/default.aspx> (accessed 23 August 2011)

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

suggestions, whilst providing a response in an efficient and timely manner.¹⁹⁸ Through the portal, citizens are given the opportunity to review and monitor the status of their query or request.¹⁹⁹ Since this initiative was launched, an average of 110 requests per day have been made.²⁰⁰

The reform on the consultation and discussion processes is being discussed by the Maltese Government in a holistic manner. Initiatives have been introduced by a number of Government Ministries, and a Parliamentary Committee was formed in order to discuss the Freedom of Information Act.²⁰¹ This aims at strengthening the Maltese democracy and increasing transparency in the ways in which the Maltese Government, agencies and departments operate, whilst enhancing citizen participation in order to fulfil what Minister Gatt refers to as the “belief in the concept of subsidiarity through which the citizen is placed at the centre of the decision making process”.²⁰²

Given the advancements of technology and the potential it holds when serving as a tool to increase citizens’ access to the government, the Maltese government has been a leader in the provision of online services.²⁰³ In a strategy report issued by the Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology, back in 2008, it is stated that the Maltese Government was “recognised twice in a row as the best provider of on-line services in Europe, and ninth in the worldwide government rankings for technology

¹⁹⁸ <https://secure2.gov.mt/servizz/about-us?l=43B1FE761FE51D49B79B53A17BBED958E92687B53C6D6161> (accessed 23 August 2011)

¹⁹⁹ Austin Gatt. 2009. pp. 91

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 91

²⁰¹ *Ibid.* pp.91

²⁰² *Ibid.* pp. 91

²⁰³ The Ministry for Investment, Industry and Information Technology. *the smart island: The National ICT Strategy for Malta 2008-2010*. pp. 40

use”.²⁰⁴ A European Commission report on e-Government, issued in 2009, also places Malta amongst the best ranking countries in the provision of online services.²⁰⁵

The strategy report issued by the Ministry states that the Government’s aim is to create new systems with the citizens at the centre, thus empowering citizens and making the service the most efficient possible. Though it is a tough challenge to overcome, the government aims at creating a new single channel that will provide all possible services, thus creating a single and central system: “www.mygov.mt will not be just a portal but a platform that sets out a radically new way of public service delivery.”²⁰⁶

The aim is also to create a platform through which the Maltese Government will interact with citizens, business, the private sector and the civil society. Participation is to be enhanced through interactive and dynamic spaces, and attractive rich media that will contribute to the public’s awareness of the Government’s initiatives and activities.²⁰⁷

E-Participation is high on the Government’s agenda.²⁰⁸ Through e-participation, the Government aims at setting out greater opportunities for consultation and tapping into the resources and knowledge that the society holds. This vision may only be implemented through ICT which has the possibility to maximise the Government’s audience whilst engaging it in the process.²⁰⁹ This is because through the proliferation of open source software, the basic idea of ‘open government’ is enhanced and nurtured thus when

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.* pp.41

²⁰⁵ European Commission: Directorate General Information Society and Media. 2009. *Smarter, Faster, Better eGovernment*. November.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 40

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 43

²⁰⁸ Austin Gatt. 2009. pp. 91

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 92

procuring ICT solutions for Government, a strategic vision with long term planning is put into action.²¹⁰

In October 2010, the Maltese Government launched its Open Source Vision Paper. Fr. Peter Serracino Inglott, Professor Emeritus of philosophy and former rector of the University of Malta, expresses great support to the Government's vision on Open Source software.

“I myself am enthusiastic in my support of the project because of the moral and political implications of the choice of this family of technologies since they are based on the recognition that knowledge is the most important part of the Common Heritage of Mankind, its radical impact on the notions and legal provisions for intellectual property in the age of cyberspace are much more consequential than classified and managing the resources of the seabed as Common Heritage of Mankind.”²¹¹

Serracino Inglott considers this proposal to be the best way through which the Government can promote the desired preference in choice of IT technologies. This calls for a concerted effort by all the ministries, but mainly from the ministry responsible of education. The White Paper calls for “the local education system acting as a major champion for nurturing concepts of openness in its wider sense both from a citizen as well as a business standpoint.”²¹² Serracino Inglott points out that the most important

²¹⁰ <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20101022/local/open-source-vision-white-paper-launched.332594> (accessed 23 August 2011)

²¹¹ Fr. Peter Serracino Inglott. 2010. “Open Source vision.” *The Times*, November 21.
<http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20101121/opinion/open-source-vision.337148> (accessed 23 August 2011)

²¹² *Ibid.*

underlying principle that this White Paper brings out is that technologies are not morally or politically neutral and the implementation of an Open Source system promotes social justice and democratic equality.²¹³

5.3 The way forward

In light of the relatively high turnout levels in elections, it may be concluded that the Maltese public is relatively interested in politics and participates in the democratic electoral processes.

According to the latest study by the National Statistics Office in Malta, Internet accessibility in households is ever increasing, as is internet use by individuals.²¹⁴ When it comes to e-Governance, statistics show that the service is gaining popularity and is maintaining a steady upward trend.²¹⁵

The e-Government Services Directory, describes e-Government as being a re-design of Public Services that are more user-centric and promote the engagement of citizens in the design of the provision of services.²¹⁶ A quantum leap in e-Government, which entails Ministries and Government agencies having the necessary infrastructure to provide information and services online, is being discussed by the MITA chairman, Claudio Grech.²¹⁷ Last year, Grech stated that although Maltese e-Government services have been recognised amongst the best services provided in recent years, a new platform that will

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=3036 pp. 31-35

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 35

²¹⁶ [https://www.mygov.mt/PORTAL/\(vu2iadjyfm20qhyw1bw5v345\)/downloads/mygov/e-Government%20Services%20Directory.pdf](https://www.mygov.mt/PORTAL/(vu2iadjyfm20qhyw1bw5v345)/downloads/mygov/e-Government%20Services%20Directory.pdf) pp. 4 (accessed 23 August 2011)

²¹⁷ Martin Debattista. 2011. "The Maltese e-government 2.0 is in the making - MITA chairman." *The Times: I-Tech*, March 4.

move e-government services into an era of open standards, social networking and mesh-ups is currently being developed.²¹⁸

5.4 Conclusion

Although the Maltese government has given due prominence to online presence from an early state, I believe that there is still a lot to be achieved on the road to achieving Government 2.0. In my opinion, the area where Malta has been lacking is in the level of public engagement which I feel leaves a lot to be desired. A difference in the way in which the ‘open government’ approach is being introduced in the United States and the United Kingdom and in the way it is being introduced in Malta can be observed. In the United States and the United Kingdom, President Obama and Prime-Minister Cameron are at the forefront promoting this new approach that will bring a change in governance. In Malta, this change is being driven by the Malta Information Technology Agency, a government agency. The introduction of an ‘open government’ approach calls for a cultural change. It is my view that in order to obtain this cultural change open governance is to be embraced by a top-bottom approach. Having leaders, like Obama and Cameron promote this change as discussed in Chapter Three, gives additional weight to the significance of the ‘open government’ approach. Whilst Obama and Cameron have both been endorsing this approach prior to being elected to their posts, thus promoting an attitude change through a top-bottom approach, the Maltese Government seems to be treating this change as an infrastructural project which is delegated to a government

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

agency. To a certain extent, it seems to be lacking tangible political will and commitment.

Another setback in the ways in which ‘open government’ is being handled is that the Maltese authorities seem to be focusing on the provision of public services online, but giving very little if any importance to the opening up of data. This causes citizens to remain sceptical about the government administration. Currently, a certain state of lethargy has settled amongst Maltese citizens with regards governance. This state has been reached through an amalgamation of a number of factors. The current Nationalist Government has been ruling for the past 24 years, but for 22 months of a Labour Government (1996-1998). With the advent of the information and communication technology revolution, expectations of citizens have changed. In Malta, ICT has been given prominence in politics and huge investments have been made in the area. Nevertheless, there seems to be a certain lack of the enhancement of ICT from Government itself. In reality, Government is working on its presence online, its online facilities and investing in ways in which data is made public to citizens, and through which citizens can collaborate and participate in governance. The problem lies in the lack of outreach and promotion that these available services are given. Grech, the Chairperson of MITA, the agency which oversees the whole process, “admits that lack of public awareness was perhaps the only mistake done in the past.”²¹⁹ This unfortunately results in the vast majority of the Maltese population not being aware of what changes are happening in the way governance is conducted, of their opportunities to engage in

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

governance processes and the provision of more effective services. Accordingly, their scepticism towards the Government, the democratic process and the Maltese democracy remains.

It is interesting to note, that Malta has been identified as a leader in the provision of e-Government services, and this happened when few governments were investing in the necessary infrastructures to provide such services, thus making Malta avant-garde in its approach to ICT. On the other hand, although structurally Malta is considered to be on the forefront, there does not yet seem to be the necessary cultural ‘revolution’ which needs to be instigated and promoted by Government in the way it interacts with its citizens and in the way in which it discloses information which was previously unavailable. As discussed in Chapter Four, citizen participation and collaboration are crucial in order for ‘open government’ to be successful. The Maltese authorities do not seem to be going so far as promoting ‘open government’ as a concept. It seems that the structural part of this approach is currently being developed and modernised, but very little, if anything, is being done in order to promote openness as the bases of a new set of opportunities to the citizens and as the cornerstone of a new way of doing politics.

The quantum leap that Grech speaks about is what I believe is needed in order to introduce an ‘open government’ approach to the Maltese society and politics in a holistic manner. This is basically the introduction of a more transparent, participatory and collaborative way of doing politics and governing. In other words, it is the reduction of the gap there exists between politicians, policy makers, and governing agencies, and the citizens. It means that the approach to politics is reversed, and from a top-bottom

approach it becomes a bottom-top approach. The 21st century is giving us the opportunity to live in the purest form of functioning democracies that we have yet experienced. Government 2.0 gives every citizen the opportunity to ‘act’ on his or her behalf, but Maltese citizens, in the large majority as still missing out on this opportunity. This may be occurring for a number of reasons: the majority of Maltese are not aware of the opportunities they have, it might be also because politicians are not adopting their politics to the new realities, or, it is simply not yet part of our political culture. As Serracino Inglott states, the opportunities that lie within a policy that is based on openness, are what promote social justice and democratic equality in their purest form.²²⁰

²²⁰ Fr. Peter Serracino Inglott. 2010. “Open Source vision.” *The Times*, November 21. <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20101121/opinion/open-source-vision.337148> (accessed 23 August 2011)

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, to this study, the main issues of adopting an ‘open government’ approach will be discussed and final conclusions could be drawn with regards what the main challenges and opportunities of a Government 2.0.

I believe that what David Held refers to as the Principle of Autonomy, which is discussed in Chapter One, is what needs to be understood and endorsed by politicians and citizens in order for the ‘open government’ approach to be adopted in a holistic manner and for the benefits of its best practices to be enjoyed by modern democracies. Held’s Principle of Autonomy suggests that, “*they[citizens] should be free and equal in the processes of deliberation about the conditions of their own lives and in the determination of these conditions, so long as they do not deploy this framework to negate the rights of others*”.²²¹ This is what I believe would be the outcome of a Government 2.0. It is through technology that social and personal democracy, is made available on a large scale.

Citizens having data in an accessible manner would bring about a number of changes and have a number of meanings. Primarily, any citizens needing information would not have to go through bureaucratic and lengthy procedures to get the data that they need. This would mean that the government would have become more efficient and transparent in its

²²¹ David Held. 2006. pp. 264

operations. In turn, this increases the government's accountability, as any allegations of the government's wrong doing or shortcomings could be unfounded. This would decrease distrust and scepticism towards politics, politicians and governments. It would also increase responsibility within the civil service, as government employees will become accountable for their individual duties and any shortcomings from their behalf are noted. As discussed earlier, citizens have become sceptical towards politicians, politics and the whole bureaucratic system, that has been operating in a closed up way. 'Open government' or Government 2.0 can be considered to be the perfect opportunity for politics to reorganise itself and develop its image.

This calls for a cultural change, not only from politicians but also from citizens. At first instance, this might evoke antagonism and hostility from politicians. I believe that this would be easily overcome if the political structure fully endorses this approach, and the benefits from it would start being felt. If politicians start making their work transparent upfront, there would be less speculation and corruption rumours about their political work. The change may also be considered to be a challenge as it is a leap into the unknown, and differs from the traditional political practices. Nevertheless, I believe that in the long run, this change will be considered as beneficial not only by citizens but also by politicians, who will gain in credibility through this change in approach.

When answering the main research question of this study, which asked if the changes that technological improvements are bringing about to governance, correspond to or contradict the democratic ideals and workings of modern democracies, I am confident that the ideals of democracy as discussed in Chapter One are empowered and enhanced. I

believe that although the challenge of adopting an ‘open government’ approach is not an easy one, the outcomes of the changes that it will bring about are of great benefit.

I believe that although an ‘open government’ approach is probably not the most popular one with governments and politicians, the majority of democracies will have to start adopting it as an approach. Technology has become part of our lives to the extent that any politician, government and democracy which does not endorse it will become outdated and obsolete. In my opinion, transparency, cooperation and participation, principles that are imperative for Government 2.0, should be the principles on which new democracies or reforming ones, should be built on. Countries which have been through the Arab Spring, which to date are Egypt, Tunisia and Libya, should seek to build their new constitutions on transparency, cooperation and participation. Citizens fought to bring a radical change to their politics and from their regimes. Building their constitutions on these principles would ensure this, whilst giving people opportunity, possibility and tools through which their personal development should be guaranteed. Whereas in functioning democracies, there might be resistance to change the status quo which is not bad after all, countries experiencing the Arab Spring are eager to experience drastic changes. This gives these countries the opportunity to endorse an ‘open government’ approach and become the pioneers of Government 2.0.

What we are currently experiencing through information and communication technology, is more speech about democracy. The fact that this is more speech does not mean that there is better speech, but there is more and new information being shared and circulated. Similarly, this does not mean that we are experiencing better democracies, but louder

calls for better democracies. This brings me to the importance of education about democracy, democratisation, and civil duties. For example, I feel that unfortunately political education is nonexistent in the Maltese educational system. This might be because of the strong bi-party system that we have in Malta and how traditionally one becomes politically affiliated to the party that his or her family supports. Politics based on openness would probably decrease this tradition, as individuals have more access to the government and the government has more access to its citizens' ideas. Nevertheless, I believe that civic duty education should start being considered to be an important component of the education system in order to ensure that all benefits from Government 2.0 are attained.

I believe that Government 2.0 presents us with the opportunity of giving power to the people; what I believe to be the purest form of democracy. This does not mean that every person would become the head of state of his or her own country, but this would mean that every individual would be given the opportunity to determine his or her own future, and also that of his or her own state. The state would no longer be what regulates what one may and may not do, but it will be there to assist its citizens to attain what they want. This is what I believe is the 'greatness' of the age we are living in. It is an opportunity that I believe should not be missed out on.

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