The Opportunities and Challenges of Implementing the Directive on Open Government in the Canadian Federal Government's Neoliberal Landscape

Danielle Ridge

LIS 9410
Dr. Ajit Pyati
August 8, 2016

Introduction

Governing in an age of rapidly changing technologies, 24-hour scrutiny and immediate demands requires fostering relationships with the public and leveraging citizen involvement to enhance and modernize liberal democracy. Involvement can occur through the implementation and participation in Open Government, whereby channels of communication between governing bodies and the citizenry encourage transparency and accountability through the release of information and increased dialogue. However, the realities of New Public Management (NPM) practices in federal politics must be considered before idealizing the merits of Open Government initiatives. Fiscal restraints, a smaller workforce, a divided system and a private-sector management style can all, to varying degrees, handicap implementation. This paper seeks to demonstrate that while Canada's neoliberal federal political climate gave rise to the Directive on Open Government, these same policies will hinder the Directive's development if the current political culture remains unchanged.

Canada's Neoliberal Climate

The Canadian federal government can be described as neoliberal, and is closely aligned with a political and programmatic commitment to NPM. The hallmarks of Canadian neoliberal policies and governance structures are the reduction, and ultimate elimination, of fiscal deficits, a desire to reduce programme spending, and a private-sector approach to resource allocation and downsizing service delivery (Clark, 2002, p. 771-72). Neoliberalism aims to promote free market growth and entrepreneurialism. However, as services that were once publicly operated become privatized, citizens take on more responsibilities, including reeducating themselves when faced with job loss, and volunteering to represent marginalized peoples (Ilcan, 2009, p. 208). As the government spends less, citizens are expected to pay more.

Related to these outcomes are the managerial philosophies prescribed through NPM, which primarily involve viewing the public as clients and consumers, as opposed to citizens. Governmental departments are dismantled into business units, and assigned managers are

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accountable for delivering efficiency and effectiveness. Service delivery is downsized to achieve the end of fiscal deficits, and therefore save public resources. This is achieved through increased technological reliance, and outsourcing to the private sector or other levels of government. These measures are intended to shift the traditional value placed on inputs and processes towards measuring results and performance (Free and Radcliffe, 2009, p. 189-192).

Defining Open Government

The advent of contemporary Open Government can be traced to the performance standards and methods championed by NPM philosophies as a way to remain accountable to the public by demonstrating progress and success. The dawn of technological ubiquity has given rise to large swaths of available data, which require management and access. Open Government, at times referred to as collaborative metagovernance, open-source government and wikigovernment, is defined by the sharing of information that results in peer production that enriches the processes of policymaking and governance (Boyle, 2014). Social media platforms, especially, offer a means through which governments and the public can interact. Governments have a duty to adapt to the realities of governing in the technological age. Citizens have already embraced it; communication technologies have caused a rise in Access to Information requests, which lean governments are having difficulty assuaging (Léveillé and Timms, 2015). Like the public has already accomplished, governments too should reap the benefits of openness.

Openness can be pursued through several avenues, including Open Data, Open Information, and Open Dialogue. Data and information that is collected and produced by the government becomes open when it is proactively disclosed in an accessible format, typically to an on-line portal. Ideally, open access also assists in treating the document as a digital native rather than a 20th century paper-based construct (Budney and McKinney, 2016). Access to Open Information and Data is critical because it promotes transparency, and therefore public trust in the government. Documents that espouse decisions and actions enable citizens to detect corruption, demand action, apply pressure for performance improvements, and evaluate

administrative competence (Harrison and Sayogo, 2014, p. 513-4); the latter two actions being intrinsic aspects of NPM ideology.

Governments themselves can use Open Data and Information to their advantage. By synthesizing and interpreting the large volume of big data at their fingertips, administrations can learn more about themselves and their citizens. With that knowledge, governments can improve the efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness of their policies and services, again satisfying core tenets of neoliberal theory. Furthermore, releasing data and information can also stimulate economic development by allowing citizens and business to capitalize on trends and analytics contained within it (Clarke and Margetts, 2014). In order to reap the legislative and economic benefits, however, governments must be willing to release information and data consistently, punctually, and in formats that permit accessibility.

Conversely, Open Dialogue serves to include citizens in enhancing transparency, accountability and responsiveness by directly engaging them in conversations with governmental entities. Born from radio call-in shows and documentary films, Open Dialogue has reached its position through social media platforms, specifically blogging sites and Twitter (Smith, 2013). Open Dialogue allows for governments to engage with citizens in real time with hashtags, or to participate in online public consultations, which are organized, publicly-funded discussions focused on a particular event (Phillips and Orsini, 2002). Critics argue that poorly managed Open Dialogue may in fact result in decision-making paralysis or produce mediocre policy. However, if properly implemented, Open Dialogue initiatives can deliver big benefits with little risk, including the cooperation of various groups to solve complex issues, ensuring the delivery of evidence-based decision-making, and creating a democratic process that is more inclusive and meaningful (Wouters and Matthews, 2016).

The Rise of Open Government in a Neoliberal Landscape

Tupper (2001) suggests that the rise of NPM was a result of the 1970s mentality that the long-serving liberal government lacked neutrality and was no longer representative of the public

it served (p. 146). Clark (2002) adds that the subsequent adoption of neoliberalism that occurred throughout the 1980s and early 1990s was established through policy innovation and a business-technocratic alliance (p. 775), which are, in fact, hallmarks of Open Government initiatives. The federal government's mimicking of the private sector's devotion to accountability, technology and monetization, in tandem with the public's increased need to access opportunity on its own, naturally informs some of the components of open governance.

For instance, NPM philosophies assume that more efficient governments can better respond to citizen interests, including demonstrating the rationalities of financial decision-making, producing multi-year budgets, and providing measurement results (Tupper, 2001). Open Government portals offer a conduit through which this critical information can be accessed and investigated by the citizenry. Ever concerned with entrepreneurialism and the ability to monetize government assets, neoliberal ideologies benefit from the public's ability to access data that can be used to attain personal gain. Private companies who must now provide the services that the government previously administered are able to access data and information that may aid in increasing the success of these services. A public that once feared a biased government is now capable of acquiring documents that prove why and how decisions are made, and engage in a dialogue with the media and politicians about the merits and faults of these decisions. In the words of the Directive on Open Government (2014), "Canadians are able to find and use Government of Canada information and data to support accountability, to facilitate value-added analysis, to drive socio-economic benefits through reuse, and to support meaningful engagement with their government."

Furthermore, Open Government initiatives even serve to remedy several disadvantages of NPM. The realities of Canada's Westminster system, in conjunction with the neoliberal agenda, has only served to constrict the government's ability to actually govern. Rather than foster cross-departmental communication, departmental divisions have created isolationist vertical siloing (Boyle, 2014, p.6). Open Government portals reunite fragmented departments

into one location. Departments can freely collaborate, and citizens no longer need to visit multiple sites or phone multiple numbers to accrue information released from several sources. The public can conveniently participate in the policymaking processes, dialogues, and accountability exercises that the neoliberal government expects.

Open Government in Canadian Federal Politics

Open Government in the context of Canadian federal politics began when the country signed the Open Government Partnership in 2011, which has since grown to over 70 participants. Following the 2009 consultation on the digital economy, which was defined by an Open Data pilot project at Environment Canada, participants demonstrated a clear interest in pursuing further Open Government initiatives (Clarke and Margetts, 2014, p. 398). Under the then-President of the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada (TBS), Tony Clement, the federal government developed an Open Data portal which permits a license for reuse of federally collected and created data and information. The use of the portal, publishing expectations and key deliverables are outlined in the Directive on Open Government, which was issued by TBS in October 2014, and its corresponding *Action Plans*, released biennially.

The objective of the Directive is to release and promote the reuse of data and information to "support transparency, accountability, citizen engagement, and socio-economic benefits" all while maintaining the "applicable restrictions associated with privacy, confidentiality, and security" (5.1). The Directive is riddled with neoliberal-friendly rhetoric. By emphasizing the transparency and accountability pieces, the Directive references neoliberal performance standards and output control requirements, essentially relying upon the citizenry to monitor governmental performance. Furthermore, by iterating the potential for socio-economic benefits, the Directive references the private sector aspects of NPM, specifically treating the public as consumers that hold economic potential. In terms of accessibility issues, *Canada's Action Plan on Open Government 2014-16* states that funding will be released to "develop online tools, training materials, and other resources to enable individual Canadians to assess and improve

their digital skills." The contracting out of skills training is yet another vestige of the NPM paradigm.

Despite the fact that the language of the Directive is very clearly indicative of correlated inputs and outputs, some champions of Open Government choose to idealize its potential. Phillips and Orsini (2002), for instance, argue that Open Government is an excellent avenue through which majoritarian governments such as Canada can reach minority groups who otherwise lack a voice in federal politics. Should citizens wish to communicate opinions that differ from those of their elected Member of Parliament, Open Dialogue allows them that opportunity (p. 6). Stuart Murray (2013), President and CEO of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, champions Open Dialogue as being the basis for the museum's direction. Built upon a "foundation of conversation," dialogue between the museum and the citizenry creates inclusive, nonhierarchical research that can in turn be released through the Open Data portal. This creates a cycle of openness that benefits the public, the government, and its institutions (p. 21-22).

Whether a by-product of neoliberalism, or an idealistic foray into 21st century post-modern politics, the Directive on Open Government presents several meritorious components. The ultimate success of the Directive relies upon its execution, which is solely dependent upon the commitment of implementing agencies and officials (Boyle, 2014, p. 15). The components of the Directive that align with NPM, such as its potential for creating socio-economic benefits, can easily be adapted. However, the aspects aimed at enhancing democracy can only be successfully implemented under the guiding hand of a devoted leader. While releasing data and information may be considered intuitive to the public, and leaders may publicly pledge their allegiance to it, "its emergence invariably encounters tensions between traditional public sector culture and structures more predicated on control-minded principles such as secrecy and hierarchy" (Roy, 2014, p. 415). As evidenced by the actions of the Harper Administration,

juxtaposed against the early maneuvers of the Trudeau Administration, how closely the Directive remains aligned to NPM, and how it is implemented, is quite flexible.

Open Government under Stephen Harper

Stephen Harper has the honour of being the Prime Minister who initiated Canada's foray into Open Government territory. However, critics of Harper argue that under his leadership, the Directive floundered. Roy (2014) suggests that Canada's Westminster parliamentary system is intrinsically at odds with Open Government, because it is, by nature, secretive and adversarial. Under Harper, this issue was exacerbated by a Senate with scandalous predilections (p. 425). Rather than propagate openness, the secrecy that plagued the Harper administration was instead counterproductive, breeding a cynical population and consequently low Open Government participation levels (Boyle, 2014, p. 17). While the Directive was intended to catalyze innovation in the private sector and facilitate 'open book governance,' the neoliberal emphasis on the entrepreneurial uses of commodified information minimized the transparency pieces. Rather than encourage two-way dialogue, the veil surrounding Harper and his administration increased public mistrust. Those who actually participated in Open Dialogue initiatives were left wondering if or how their input was utilized (Philipps and Orsini, p. 23). Open Government's alleged purveyor nearly succeeded in instituting its demise.

Open Government under Justin Trudeau

Open Government is now in the hands of Harper's ideological opposite, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He verbalized his commitment to Open Government and all of its facets while he was campaigning, and has not eased since gaining power. In his mandate letter to TBS President Scott Brison (2015), who is responsible for overseeing the Directive on Open Government, he states that "Canadians need to have faith in their government's honesty and willingness to listen," a key component of Open Dialogue. He iterates the value of performance measurements, evidence, feedback and collaboration.

He argues for better relationships with Indigenous people, a typically isolated, underrepresented community who can benefit from properly implemented Open Government initiatives. He notes the necessity of making information open by default, because "we want Canadians to trust their government, we need a government that trusts Canadians." Furthermore, openness and transparency can be achieved through "constructive dialogue with Canadians." Very little neoliberal rhetoric is used. Other than a brief note that Open Government can be used to "ensure we obtain good value for our money," he mainly focuses upon its democratic merits.

In his Speech from the Throne, Governor General David Johnston (2015) echoes Trudeau's sentiments. He draws attention to Canada's diverse perspectives and opinions, and argues that they should be "celebrated, not silenced." He hints at the Harper administration's failures, stating that transparency and openness can restore the public's faith in Parliamentary processes. Specifically, he calls for public consultations on electoral reforms, and open debates within the House of Commons. In all, the Trudeau Administration is at the very least rhetorically championing the ideals of Open Government.

Within a few months, the new Liberal government appeared to be delivering on its promises, announcing public consultations on both a new Defense Policy, as well as reforms to the Access to Information Act. Boasting that it was the first of its kind in over 20 years, the Defense Policy consultations consisted of an online feedback form for individual citizens that could be accessed through the Open Government portal; 6 cross-country roundtable meetings; paper solicitations; and the establishment of Senate and House committees on defense (Government of Canada, 2016, April 26). However, the processes surrounding the reforms to the Access to Information Act were not as graceful.

Not only has the Trudeau Administration inherited the Directive on Open Government, it must continue to execute it while navigating the neoliberal policy channels designed by its

predecessors. How Brison intends on doing that remains to be seen. His early attempts at reforming the Access to Information Act have proven to be lacklustre.

The Act has remained unchanged since 1983, and is grossly outdated, the review of which was flagged by Trudeau as a priority in his mandate letter to Brison. The Act is currently being "revitalized," which in part consists of a collaboration held with the public from May 5th to June 30th, 2016. A consultative website offered citizens a channel through which they could comment on government proposals or submit their own proposals. There was also a Twitter hashtag through which citizens could participate. However, when the Canadian Press requested access to memos regarding the changes to the Act, the Treasury Board withheld some of them under the auspices of the Act itself, claiming advice, consultations and deliberations are limited and specific exemptions to the Act (Bronskill, 2016).

Bronskill argues that these exemptions are not mandatory, and that publishing the documents would actually encourage the dialogue the government is trying to build. It would demonstrate to Canadian citizens what the government is thinking, and allow the government to hear where the public stands on the issue. Léveillé and Timms (2015) agree, stating that "transparency and accountability can only truly be achieved when…the gap that exists between a proactive and a reactive approach to the release of information is narrowed" (p. 157). Despite the fact that Trudeau's speeches demonstrate a commitment to releasing information, he has inherited a public service accustomed to operating within the confines of neoliberal policies that thwart dissemination. Whether or not the issue is the fault of the new government, or a poorly handled vestige of the old, is unclear. What is obvious, however, is that attempts to reform the Act have demonstrated how NPM philosophies can be detrimental to the ongoing development of Open Government initiatives.

Fiscal Austerity and the Limited Success of Open Government Initiatives

Despite the theoretical advantages of reducing deficits, embracing technology and encouraging entrepreneurialism, neoliberalism has in part stagnated governmental processes

and the effectiveness of delivering policies such as the Directive on Open Government. Critics of the neoliberal agenda argue that it has actually limited the accountability and effectiveness of the government because it treats citizens like consumers rather than participants (Nguyen, 2014). While embracing technology has increased mobility and governmental platforms, a host of other issues have arisen that the government must now handle, including privacy, accessibility and the digital divide (Roy, 2014, p. 417). Media campaigns to encourage the public to seek further information regarding services often fall on deaf ears. What is intended to be informational comes across as propaganda, actually costing money rather than saving it (p. 426).

Karré, van der Steen and van Twist (2011) go further, arguing that budget cuts have resulted in governments losing their traditionally dominant roles in society. Private and societal groups are considered to be just as influential. Therefore, governments are expected to do more, but with less money and less authority (p. 59-60). Governments may remove themselves from providing public services altogether, leaving citizens to fend for themselves (p. 64).

If citizens are now expected to take on the responsibilities once harboured by the federal government, they need access to the information and data that will permit success. Therefore, the government's responsibility is now to release accurate and readable information and data to the citizenry on a timely basis. Furthermore, they have a duty to create channels through which citizens can access that information, meaning a commitment to maintaining online portals, engaging in dialogue with the public to determine and subsequently deliver informational needs, to connect communities to computers and high speed internet, and to educate individuals on how to use these tools. Unfortunately, these measures cost time and money, and rely upon cross-departmental relationships in order for information to be consistently released and for meaningful two-way dialogue to occur. All of these requirements are at odds with neoliberalism and the NPM philosophies that assist it.

i) The cost of digital upkeep

The costs associated with maintaining the technological aspects of Open Government are alone more than austere neoliberal budgets can provide. What the carefully crafted words of both the Harper and Trudeau Administrations fail to mention is the sheer magnitude of technological considerations. The 2016 federal budget included $12.9 million over five years to help TBS enhance the aforementioned Access to Information Act, as well as $11.5 million over five years to expand Open Data and Dialogue initiatives (Government of Canada, 2016, May 5). Despite these budgetary promises, the costs associated with preparing data and information for release are high.

Firstly, data and information that is eligible for publication must be identified, modified through anonymization, reconfigured or reformatted, and contextualized through the addition of metadata (Léveillé and Timms, 2015, p. 173-4). These metadata elements are tedious, time-consuming, and therefore costly, to identify and input, especially for documents that are not created digitally. However, metadata may be the most important element of Open Government preparation. As Conroy and Scassa (2015) argue, data is biased and requires context. For instance,

> A decision by a government to conduct a demographic survey that asks
> some questions but not others results in a compilation of data that embeds
> the biases that shaped the framing of the questions. Data gathered using
> some media that are accessible only to certain segments of the population
> are similarly not neutral in that the responses are filtered through certain
> levels of privilege and access (p. 185)

Specific to federal data and information is the subsequent requirements of translating the documents into both English and French, and analysis for possible intellectual property breaches (Sieber and Phillips, 2015, p. 313-14). Under the Privacy Act, the federal government has a duty to protect personal, individual information and data it keeps, and must scrub these pieces from documents prior to disclosure. If data is collected through Open Dialogue initiatives,

it must be received and processed, aggregated, and finally interpreted (Léveillé and Timms, 2015, p. 173-4), which, again, costs money. Trudeau desires a system that is open-by-default, so the majority of the government's data and information will have to go through this intensive and expensive preparation process.

Secondly, the technology that hosts the data must be created and maintained in order to support preservation and access (Léveillé and Timms, 2015, p. 173-4). Once data and information is released, it must continue to be updated or risk online rot, essentially becoming outmoded and inaccessible over time. Even then, the released data is still only in raw format, unreadable to the average citizen. Those citizens who live and work beyond the technocratic confines of some private sectors require training and education on how to access, manipulate and interpret information. Otherwise, only those already possessing the knowledge will benefit from Open Government initiatives, contradicting the all-inclusive purpose of the programme.

In order to ensure that all citizens have equal access to available data and information, the government should be mindful of the so-called digital divide. Targeted training and education on technological access should be provided, or at least funded, by the government. However, this is not only expensive, but at odds with the neoliberal commitment to reduce programme delivery and service spending. Furthermore, due to the size and population density of the country, numerous communities are rural or isolated, and therefore without reliable access to the internet. Numbers indicate that Canadian neoliberal tendencies are in fact hindering the availability of tools required to connect citizens to Open Data, Information and Dialogue.

Produced by the World Wide Web Foundation, the Open Data Barometer measures the readiness, success of implementation and impact of open data within 92 nations. The 2015 results ranks Canada 4th out of 92 countries, with a score of 80.35 percent for its prevalence of Open Data initiatives. However, the Barometer also indicates that Canada only has a 67 percent impact score, meaning that despite the prevalence of Open Data initiatives, and the citizens'

willingness to use them, its actual influence is lacklustre. This disconnect may be in part due to the fact that the Barometer also highlights that Canada only has 87.12 internet users per 100 people (compared to 91.61 users in Britain and 93.17 users in the Netherlands), and a score of 7 out of 10 for "the extent of available training for individuals and businesses wanting to increase skills and build businesses to use Open Data."

This particular score is especially disconcerting considering that *Canada's Action Plan on Open Government 2014-2016* expressly states that the government plans to "develop online tools, training materials, and other resources to enable individual Canadians to assess and improve their digital skills." Trudeau has inherited Harper's Connecting Canadians project, which is intended to use $305 million to connect 280,000 rural and remote households to high-speed internet by 2017, an endeavor that may serve to close the digital gaps. However, this and the aforementioned $11.5 million allocated to expand Open Data and Dialogue initiatives, pale in comparison to the budgets of other neoliberal-leaning countries. Consider that the UK government is investing £6 billion in IT, including broadband (Olphert and Damodaran, 2007, p. 496), and the Australian government is investing $37.4 billion in its National Broadband Network (James, 2013). The costs associated with delivering the technological aspects of the Directive on Open Government may halt it before it gains traction.

ii) Human network requirements

While the costs associated with the technological components of Open Government are obvious, the time and money involved in the human requirements are less conspicuous, but no less crucial. The effects of the neoliberal desire to seek fiscal austerity and downsize is fully quantifiable in terms of the federal public service. According to Statistics Canada (2016), the size of the public service was 250,882 in 1983, the brink of NPM adoption. At this time, the country's population stood at 25.3 million, meaning the public service constituted 0.99 percent of the population. By 2015, however, these numbers had grossly changed. Despite the fact that the population has grown by over 40 percent to 35.8 million, the number of public servants is

257,034, constituting just 0.72 percent of the population. Furthermore, the 2015 numbers are actually better than several years in the mid-1980s and early-1990s.

In addition to the workforce constraints that neoliberal policies have placed on the public service, there is a demand for increased accountability structures and layers of oversight. These components of NPM are burdensome to an already thin public service. On top of having to produce the work required of them, public servants are also expected to take on the additional tasks associated with oversight (Free and Radcliffe, 2009, p. 202-3). The federal government is operating within tight parameters. Because neoliberal policies have weakened the federal government's manpower, the success of fully realizing the Directive on Open Government may be hampered.

Implementing and maintaining the Directive on Open Government requires commitment, especially to ensuring consistent preparation and publishing of information, as well as technological upkeep. However, a by-product of a small, underfunded public service is increased mobility, and related to that, a weak institutional memory. Public servants move from one department to another frequently, including those who are familiar with, and champions of, Open Government. This movement, a result of Baby Boomers retiring, and fewer new hires to replace them, leave projects, such as those associated with Open Government, incomplete or without supervisors. Being able to identify the types of information and data that a department creates and publishes takes time, so high mobility rates cause inconsistent and backlogged disclosures (Phillips and Orsini, 2002).

Technological knowledge gaps are also appearing as a result of the government's reluctance to hire new public servants, especially younger ones. Open Government initiatives are intended to aid the technology sectors, traditionally the playground of the Millennial generation, by providing free data and information that can generate innovation and entrepreneurship. However, the demographics of the public service reflect an aging, stagnant population that may be out of touch with the rapidly evolving technologies required to both

facilitate Open Government and benefit from it. Statistics Canada (2016) highlights the fact that the average age of federal employees is 45.0 years, an increase of over 5 years since 1983, with a decline in the proportion of employees under 35, and an increase in those over 50.

TBS President Brison is aware of the disconnect between the realities of the federal government and the Open Government desires of the Millennial generation. He recently stated that **"for most Canadians, the transparency bus has left the station. You try to explain to a millennial why a lot of this information isn't rendered public, and you lose them" (Boutilier, 2016). Tight budgets and an aging workforce may be creating distrust and disinterest within the younger population, the opposite of Open Government intentions.

The tight budgets and smaller public servant workforce is especially detrimental to Open Dialogue initiatives. The success of Open Dialogue is predicated on a two-way conversation, whereby the public inputs opinions on important matters, and politicians respond to suggestions and concerns. Ideally, the final policy will be reflective of the dialogue that occurred during its inception. However, because public servants have limited time and funds, these conversations do not always happen. Instead, politicians make decisions quickly because they have a never ending workload to handle. Or, perhaps more problematically, MPs measure the success of Open Dialogue initiatives on the quantity, not quality of participants. Relying on easily manipulated basic data is far less expensive and time-consuming than collating and translating written and verbalized discussions (Phillips and Orsini, 2002, p. 19). Rather than engaging in the meaningful conversations Open Dialogue initiatives are intended to create, the government is merely counting participants to satisfy an Open Government consultation checkbox.

iii) A tendency to release data for monetary gain

The entrepreneurial and innovative side-effects of the Directive on Open Government both serve to advance the private sector, wherein the majority of the population works, and fulfill the third-party outsourcing mandate intrinsic to NPM ideologies. However, Open Government

initiatives can lead to further-reaching results, such as enhancing democracy. By focusing solely on the neoliberal advantages of the Directive, the government may inadvertently harm it.

Sieber and Johnson (2015) argue that while Open Data and Information can lead to increased service delivery, such as improving bus routes, it is often accompanied by commodification, not the political messages concerning transparency and improved decision-making. The wants of the public and the realities of the neoliberal agenda have resulted in conflicting motivations in terms of Open Government, especially concerning the ethical versus technical. Citizens desire access to information to monitor accountability and anti-corruption. Instead, the government tends to frame Open Data as a commercialization tool. This may inadvertently cause a disproportionate release of technical information in formats that are only accessible to technical users, or third parties only interested in translating data that can be used for profit.

Participatory Open Data is a school of thought that offers a calculated release of data that can serve to achieve broader goals of inclusion and participation in decision-making. This, rather than the current idea of "openness for the sake of openness," would allow for citizens to be able to request the types of data they would like to see released. Furthermore, it could relieve some of the burden placed on fiscally stressed departments, and allow for collaboration on mutually identified issues (Sieber and Johnson, 2015, p. 311). The government needs to be prepared to hear opinions from the public that may conflict with party opinions, and recognize these discrepancies when creating policy. Otherwise, citizens will lose trust, defeating the purpose of Open Government.

iv) A distant vertical government

As previously noted, Open Government requires horizontal approaches to governing, whereby departments are flexible, communicative and adaptable. Instead, the current Westminster system, in conjunction with neoliberal trends, has created a federal government that emphasizes rules, divides labour, and generally strengthens hierarchies. In an era during

which the government should be considering horizontal partnerships and interdependence (Tupper, p. 147), signs of further siloing are actually apparent.

In July 2016, Statistics Canada presented a plan that would free it from government control and allow the department to collect data held by private companies. New authority would be given to the Chief Statistician, in an attempt to liberate the department from political influence, much like the Bank of Canada. Moreover, it has requested a separate computer infrastructure, so as to distance itself from the centralized information technology unit that currently supports it. The department argues that "being on the centralized system the rest of the federal bureaucracy uses gives government tech staff 'an effective veto' on any StatsCan work, by not providing tech support for it. Statistics Canada would prefer not to answer to anyone, including the guys in IT" (Libin, 2016).

Rather than describe itself as just one of several components of a functioning government, Statistics Canada has also begun to trump its own, individual value. In a discussion paper shared with the Canadian Press, the department refers to itself as "a key institution in the democratic process" that "informs the electorate of the state of the nation aiding citizens in choosing their governments, and in holding those governments to account" (Libin, 2016). Because of its role in the democratic process, it argues that it should be liberated in order to become free of bias. Whether or not Statistics Canada is granted the liberties it has requested remains to be seen; but the fact that it has appealed for this practice suggests that the political climate is one that may possibly embrace further departmental segregation.

In fact, channels through which departments can become bias-free already exist within the context of Open Government. Rather than trying to further distance itself from a government that should be moving towards collaboration and centralization, Statistics Canada could embrace the Open Government movement. Releasing data and information regarding decision-making processes and financial choices would permit the department to be analyzed and held accountable by those whom it serves, the public. Instead, the neoliberal trend of treating

departments as separate, private-sector entities is creating a distance between the public and the institutions who serve them, the opposite intention of the Directive on Open Government.

v) A need for cultural change

Despite the fiscal austerity, the downsizing and the outsourcing that have resulted from the neoliberal agenda, the federal government is still large, cumbersome, and slow to change. This too can affect the success of Open Government, considering it thrives in a climate where changing technology is quickly adapted, and citizens can participate in of-the-moment issues. Open Government cannot be implemented linearly. Instead, its components are interrelated and co-dependent, and require new ways through which policies are created and consultations are strategized (Boyle, 2014, p. 18). Essentially, the current organizational design and political culture need to be overhauled. Anything less will only serve to prevent Open Government initiatives from reaching their full potential.

Public servants are aware of the necessity of these changes. Documents prepared for TBS President Brison, received through Access to Information requests by Boutilier (2016), argue that the culture of the federal government is plagued by "limited disclosure, insular policy making, [which takes into account the] federal view only," and can only be righted by the cultural change of 257,000 federal employees. The documents also shed light on outmoded internal communications functions in the government, which only serve to further divide already isolated departments. Most damningly, the documents present grumblings that releasing more information may in fact increase PR headaches. Overworked, under-supported public servants are averse to Open Government because they worry it will only prove to be burdensome within their neoliberal reality. Without the full support of those responsible for its implementation, the Directive on Open Government will fail before it can be fully launched.

Neoliberalism and Open Government: Reaching Political Harmony

Rather than pit Open Government against NPM, perhaps it can be perceived as an extension of the neoliberal policies that are already in place. The government will always need

to be measured on its success, and be held accountable for its decisions and actions, regardless of neoliberal rhetoric. The Directive on Open Government can assist in that endeavor. Conroy and Scassa (2015) argue that "history has shown that traditional methods of ensuring political accountability, such as regular elections or government audits, do not provide sufficient protection against corruption" (p. 184). Instead, regularly released information and data on the Open Data portal can foster public monitoring of governmental actions and decisions, offering a different, inclusive method of oversight. Not only does this make the government more transparent, it simultaneously fulfills the private-sector approach to accountability that is one of the hallmarks of neoliberalism.

Moreover, because NPM philosophies aim to treat the government as a business and citizens as consumers, Open Dialogue can be seen as an extension of the business process (Léveillé and Timms, 2015, p. 175). Citizen-customers can converse and become involved in the dealings of the government-businesses in which they invest. Open Dialogue is also mutually beneficial. While citizens gain information on their investments, governments gain knowledge on what the public expects. Through Open Dialogue, governments can use statistics and information to better deliver programs and services to their clients—the public (p. 176).

Overburdened workers may also see a reduction in Access to Information requests if Open Data and Information are released in a timely, consistent manner. If neoliberal policies demand tighter budgets and less workers, Open Government initiatives can at least aid in relieving some of those burdens. When data and information is proactively disclosed, citizens can readily access it. Public servants can focus on completing their traditional activities, rather than juggling immediate requests from the public. Ultimately, if the purpose of neoliberalism is to measure the success of the government, auditors can use levels of participation and accountability, rather than service outputs and cost-cutting mechanisms, to determine achievements (Nguyen, 2014, p. 5). In this way, the Directive on Open Government actually serves to aid the neoliberal agenda, not contradict it.

Reconciling the Directive on Open Government within the Neoliberal Agenda

Despite the obvious hindrances, the Directive on Open Government may still flourish within its neoliberal confines. TBS President Brison is aware of a need for a political cultural change, and Trudeau is at least rhetorically committed to seeing Open Government through successfully. What remains at the moment is what Roy (2014) dubs "cautious exploration" (p. 421). In other words, while the messages of Trudeau align with the public's desire for immediate, consistent release of information and data, the reality is that the approach has been tepid.

Ideally, Open Government will produce a one-stop service for accessing tax information, pension, census data, and all other personal, governmentally-held information (Isfeld, 2016), overcoming the divisional issues associated with the Westminster system. Furthermore, it will serve to overcome outmoded internal communications practices as it pushes for technological innovation. If the government commits to electronic approvals, the time-consuming printing, scanning, signing, scanning and emailing communications system currently in place will be removed. Roy (2014) goes even further, imagining the development of a national repository that may help coordinate and integrate various Open Data initiatives. All levels of government could contribute to innovative and open governance, using the Joint Councils as a tether (p. 428). This would allow citizens to access information from all levels of government, in one place.

If the cautious exploration continues, even in the presence of expectations and promises that counter it, the entire purpose of the Directive on Open Government will be negated. Failure to accept and then adapt to the realities of the 21st century will only cause governments to "continue to impose their agenda on participants through a veneer of legitimacy, or what they call consultation" (Nguyen, 2014, p. 6). The Trudeau Administration must ensure that verbal promises become concrete deliverables.

Conclusion

While Canada's neoliberal federal political climate gave rise to the Directive on Open Government, these same policies will hinder the Directive's development if the current political culture remains unchanged. Trudeau has an opportunity to see through the Open Government initiatives introduced by Harper; but will only be successful if he recognizes that the neoliberal agenda can hinder implementation and rectify it. His success, or lack thereof, will not be noticeable for at least another year. As noted by British Cabinet Minister Francis Maude, releasing information during the first twelve months of a new administration is easy, because only the data produced by the previous government is likely to be eligible for release (Potter, 2016). Furthermore, the real measure of success will be ensuring that support and interest in the project is maintained over time; not just in terms of the government's commitment, but the public's as well (Boyle, 2014, p. 17). While fiscal austerity, an overburdened public service and suffocating layers of oversight are reasons why Open Government may fail to launch, leveraging citizen involvement can actually be seen as an extension of the neoliberal agenda, and simultaneously enhance the democratic processes of the 21st century.

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