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**César Calderón y Sebastián Lorenzo (Coord.),
Open Government, Gobierno abierto. Argentina,
Capital Intelectual-Algón Editores, 2010.**

Juan Alberto García Rodríguez

To speak of *Open Government* entails duality in its connotation that is not easy to identify and is followed by different conceptualizations; the latter do not necessarily clarify or explain with precision this trend, innovation or proposal that wants to be explained. It involves openness, transparency, accountability and new informations and communications technology (ICT) in government and public administrations; it also entails consultation, deliberation and representation and above all citizens' and population's participation in public affairs of their locality and the political community in general.

> "Open Government is a series of practices that allows democratic governments to interact with citizens by permanently using conversational principles which go both ways; that is talking and listening and answering to know opinions and reacting to these, thus improving the provision of services and promulgation of rules" (Tierno Galván, 2010).

This is the ideal that inaugurated President Barack Obama's administration in the US: "We will work together to ensure the public trust and establish a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration. Openness will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government."[1] It represents a turning point and a new way to understand the relationship among State, those in charge of public issues and inhabitants and their territory;

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[1]   Obama, B. *Transparency and Open Government.* http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_ press_office/TransparencyandOpenGovernment

this is why its definition is permanently being expanded and resignified, it forced government and public administration processes to be rethought and redesigned.

The book offers a brief introduction that includes the history, elements and movements that gave birth to *Open Government*; similarities between its development and expressions of technological improvement such as the *free software movement* (in its different moments and stages) and the appearance and development of *Web 2.0* or *social Web* through the global internet information network is briefly reviewed. *Open Government* is not e-government because it not only digitalizes administration, services and activities but also organizes a series of changes and redefines (or adopts) values (cultural, organizational and procedural) and achieves new forms of expression and connection with citizens.

In this sense, the compilation of these articles includes a brief **Introduction** by César Calderón and Sebastián Lorenzo; these coordinators have set the guidelines to exhaustively study the topics presented in this book.

Subsequently, Alberto Ortiz de Zárate outlines, through a unique allegory of "public", the virtues of openness and its potential to help develop individuals and societies; later on, the first chapter discusses the "obsession" modern democracies have with citizen participation, governments that have sprung from these and public administrations through which they exercise their functions.

Later on, the "*Las 10 claves para entender la colaboración en el modelo de Open Government*" (*10 keys to understanding collaboration in the Open Government Model*) written by Javier Linares deals with the new conditions of the relationship between authorities and citizens, as well as the role public administration will play by being a contributor and facilitator and not sole provider and regulator through citizens' involvement and participation in addressing public affairs.

In *Transparency?*, Carlos Guardián Orta addresses the delimitation of one of the pillars of *Open Governments*: "transparency" in every act, data and information held by public authorities, as well as the importance of establishing a permanent and synchronic connection with citizens through ICT tools such as Web 2.0.

Osvaldo Nemirovsci tries to answer the questions brought on by the government-citizens duo under the new conditions and potentialities

that ICTs bring about, so as to know if we are really facing a cultural change or paradigm shift

Gobierno Abierto, una aproximación desde el Estado (Open Government, the State's approach) by Antonio Machado is without a doubt the book's main attraction, the backbone of all of the other essays, the do's and don'ts for Open Government due to his current state vision, reflection and projection.

Una historia con dos finales (A tale with two endings) by Pablo Díaz Cruz is the diagnostic part of the compilation. It specifically addresses the obstacles and challenges that Open Government will have to face; although it also analyzes the achievements, areas of opportunity and courses to follow.

Diplomacia abierta-Nueva diplomacia (Open diplomacy-New diplomacy) by *Rafael Estrella* is an example of specialization, where *Open Government* can ensure greater transparency and better conceptualization (definition) and comprehension of vague and complex areas such as diplomacy and international relationships from a legal point of view and public administration for citizens.

César Ramos Esteban writes an interesting and important essay, especially for Mexico; in *La apertura a la sociedad: una necesidad (Openness and society: a necessity)* he puts forward important reflections and questions regarding the implications of open governments and how these can affect political parties and politicians from the moment electoral campaigns start, when they are candidates and up until the moment they are elected. With all of the obligations and responsibilities this entails.

On the other hand, Nagore de los Ríos in *Los nuevos liderazgos* (The new leaderships) proposes a deficit and a need in the context of current societies: the emergence of social leaderships that can become more than political drivers and representatives, social managers that encourage permanent communication between citizens and authorities, promoting available means and technologies and simultaneously promoting accountability like it has never been.

In this sense, the bidirectioanlity of the new ruler-citizens relationship is addressed by Daniela Vilar in *Estrategias de OGoV para un desarrollo sostenible* (Open Government Strategies for sustainable development); she voices the need for a new co-responsibility archetype

that promotes citizen empowerment, and at the same time makes governance common through *Open Government* principles.

Meanwhile, *Gobierno Abierto para fortalecer la democracia (Open Government to strengthen democracy)* by Juan Manuel Alba Medina describes another Networked Government trend. He emphasizes the importance of communication tools that Social Web provides for this assimilation and participation processes by citizens such as forums, wikis and collaboration platforms in general, as well as their impact in social and political relationships of the community; but above all public management.

Moreover, Martín Olvera addresses social and technological development expression, which is essential for this model in *Del software libre al Gobierno Abierto. Procesos de construcción colaborativa (From free software to Open Government. Collaborative construction processes)* where he explains in evolutionary terms the history, specifications, applications and potentials of "free software" for public affairs, general interest and other state activities.

Juan Ignacio Belbis writes *Gobernanza Abierta en espacios legislativos (Open Governance in legislative spaces)* and states the implications (on innovation and improvement terms) in every area but especially in legislative processes, implementation of new ICT so as to achieve "Legislative Governance".

Datos, informaciones, obras y gobiernos abiertos a los ciudadanos (Data, information, works and opern governments for citizens) by Ariel Vercelli refelcts upon the nature of data, public information and intellectual works owned by the State, legal regime and rights they are subject to so as to favor the participation, collaboration and contribution of citizens with public administrations, but above all collectivity.

Lastly, *Herramientas para la gestión participativa de las diversidades (Tools for participatory management of diversity)* by Jorge Cabezas is the culmination of all the proposals and ideas poured throughout the book; it invites us to conclude that once we have convinced ourselves of the viability of open governments; stating that arguments that claim technological, political, social and economic deficits are completely false; the teleological basis is totally and absolutely framed within Public Administration principles.

All of the essays of this work agree on the fact that contemporary public administration needs to include citizens in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policies, so as to achieve the social co-responsibility ideal that governance entails. Nowadays, communication and public management tools are within the reach of anyone, their synchronic communication and mobilization in regards to events to express positions in accordance with common objectives will be common practice.

This text presents a general overview of Open Government, a current trend in Public Administration and Political Sciences and it also constitutes a first approach to different sources and perspectives of the ideas and proposal of this model.

Most of the essays can be easily read and understood by undergraduate public administration, law and other social sciences students. It will be a very important resource for teachers, researchers and public employees, they will find in these pages ideas to reflect on and debate the current state of this discipline.

Before concluding this paper, I would like to state –and surely you will agree once you have read this book-:

The future of democracy is in direct proportion to the exercise of citizenry; the openness of public administrations includes that every level can be publicly monitored and scrutinized; this is Open Government and its main goal is to strengthen citizens' trust in their representatives, rulers and state institutions so as to deepen democracy and make the actions of Public Administrations more efficient and effective.