Open Government: 
The Line between Privacy and Transparency

Maryam Al-Jamal, MIS Department, IT College, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan
Emad Abu-Shanab, MIS Department, IT College, Yarmouk University, Irbid, Jordan

ABSTRACT
This article takes a deeper look into the related concepts and issues of open government, its benefits and challenges and some related processes. Also, this article tries to identify the line between government transparency and people's privacy under the open government initiatives, by exploring transparency and privacy in more details. Finally, the authors propose a framework that depicts the premise related to this topic.

KEYWORDS
Accountability, Benefits, Challenges, Framework, Open Data, Open Government, Open Government Data, Privacy, Transparency

1. INTRODUCTION
The availability of Internet, mobile technologies and social networks created huge data sets and fostered the open government idea. Open data as a concept is found to be useful for people in many ways; the data is useable anytime anywhere free of cost and copyright constrains. The availability of data and knowledge motivated the public to ask for more transparency from their governments, while the demand for participation and collaboration with government has increased. All that led to the idea of Open Government (OG) initiative and introduced transparency, accountability, participation and collaboration as its main principles.

While all these goals and principles are very important for the public, privacy has raised critical concerns for them. The problem of privacy appeared side by side with the goal of achieving transparency. For achieving higher levels of transparency, disclosing more data is required. While privacy is the right of a person to keep his/her identity anonymous, OG slipped into the trap of violating its laws. OG movement implies publishing public data records and other Big Data (BD) and making it available to the public. And that process may include identifiable data. OG itself doesn't violate privacy constrains, but the way it is implemented might violate privacy laws by combining various sets of data that will eventually result in personally identifiable data. This requires a careful look into the literature to first, understand the concepts of OG, and second, to propose methods on how to avoid violating privacy issues when approaching OG principles.

This paper is organized in the following structure: section two will cover the topic through a survey of existing literature. Important concepts to open government will be defined, benefits and challenges of open government that has been viewed in the literature will be summarized, and some critical implementation issues will also be discussed. Also, transparency of open government will be considered in greater details depending on the existing literature. Then a deeper look into privacy in

DOI: 10.4018/IJPADA.2018040106

Copyright © 2018, IGI Global. Copying or distributing in print or electronic forms without written permission of IGI Global is prohibited.
the context of open government will be developed. In the third section of this paper we will present our proposed research framework. Finally, section four presents the conclusions and future agenda proposed.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

With the new emerging technologies and ICT tools, the concept of open data was introduced. Open data as a concept has the same objectives of other open initiatives like open source software and open access. The following sections will explore the literature related to open government data and to other related issues such as privacy and transparency.

2.1. Deeper Look into Open Government

In order to define open government, a very close concept must be also defined which is Open Data (OD). The two concepts are closely related and need to be explored together to understand the whole domain.

2.1.1. Open Data Concept

OD is the data that is in a format easily available to reuse, free of cost, accessible to all and free of copy right constrains for redistribution purposes (Barry & Bannister, 2014). Others define open data as allowing local, regional and national data to be available in an editable and changeable format (Rojas, Lovelle, Bermúdez & Montenegro, 2013). Also, open data process is the process of publishing, linking, finding, using and reusing data (Zuiderwijk et al., 2012).

Open government data is another concept that is widely discussed in the literature with OGD acronym, and it is used interchangeably with OG. OGD is the data that is owned by the public sector then published on the Internet to citizens free of cost and copyright constrains to make its re-use and re-distribution easier (Kucera & Chlapek, 2014). Others concluded that OGD is opening up and publishing government data for personal or commercial use of people, businesses or other government bodies for their improved quality (McCusker, Lebo, Chang, Da Silva & McGuinness, 2012).

2.1.2. Open Government Concept

Open government means enabling citizens to play new roles in their relationship with the government, moving toward democracy that implies the right of citizens to collectively and individually participate in governance process (Janices & Aguerre, 2013).

Open government, as a concept, has taken a new path when being mentioned as an initiative by the president of USA Barack Obama. Obama laid three main principles for open government initiative: transparency, collaboration and participation. Providing information about government activities to the public to increase transparency and enable accountability is one of the main objectives of such initiative. The second objective is the effective participation of the public towards enhancing government’s policies when providing suggestions and expertise to the government. Finally, the partnership and cooperation between the government and other governments, private and business agencies, and citizens are required to increase government’s efficiency and effectiveness; that is collaboration (Orszag, 2009).

For the purpose of this study, Open Government will be used to refer to the “process” and Open Government Data will be used to refer to the “data” published by governments. Based on the previous discussion; we define open government as “publishing public sector information for its use/reuse with no cost or restrictions, and for empowering people to be able participate and collaborate with transparent governments”.

The literature of open government reported many benefits and obstacles. Janssen, Charalabidis and Zuiderwijk (2012) categorized the benefits that they collected into three categories: political
Management Aspects of e-Government Projects: Contextual and Empirical Findings
[www.igi-global.com/article/management-aspects-of-e-government-projects/117753?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/management-aspects-of-e-government-projects/117753?camid=4v1a)

The Gender Dimension in Urban Air Quality
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-gender-dimension-in-urban-air-quality/215854?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/the-gender-dimension-in-urban-air-quality/215854?camid=4v1a)