

Chapter 11

Digitalizing Police Requirements: Opening up Justice Through Collaborative Initiatives

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ABSTRACT

In the last one or two years, the growing demand for an open state has sped up the adoption of ICT aimed at improving access to justice, making the judiciary more transparent, increasing cooperation between legal authorities, and strengthening the justice system itself. Of particular importance are interoperability initiatives since they guarantee collaboration as well as the harmonic and cohesive functioning of different existing systems, processes, and applications that, in the justice field, are many as a result of the big variety of actors that are involved: judicial institutions but, also, different public administrations, such as those responsible of police forces, and law professionals. The chapter describes and analyzes GRP (Gestió de Requeriments Policials), a project that allows for the exchange of information between the Department of Justice and the Department of the Interior in the framework of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia (Spain).

INTRODUCTION

On January 2009, President Obama signed the Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government. The memorandum declares the new administration's commitment to creating an unprecedented level of openness in government and establishing a system linking three principles: transparency, public participation, and collaboration.

Although there is agreement on the popularization of the term by the Obama Administration's Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government, the concept is not new. Despite the first written reference dates back to 1957, when Parks (1957) published "The open government principle: applying the right to know under the Constitution", its use goes back to the 70s, when the British government

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promoted several initiatives aimed at achieving more information freedom and more access to government's activity and, therefore, at reducing opacity (Chapman & Hunt, 2006). Along time, and as a consequence of contributions from different fields¹, this first approach has been refined, giving rise to a definition related to enhancing transparency, collaboration, and participation by means of open data and open action. Gascó (2014) summarizes and operationalizes these dimensions stating that an open government is (see Table 1):

- A transparent government, that is, a government that is accountable and that delivers information to citizens about its strategies, plans, and performance.
- A collaborative government, that is, a government that involves citizens and other external and internal actors in the design, delivery and evaluation of public services.
- A participative government, that is, a government that promotes citizen engagement in political processes and, particularly, in the design of public policies.
- A government that prioritizes the use of two key tools: open data (that is, data that are available in standardized and structured formats, that are machine-readable, and that are guaranteed to be freely available over time) and open action (that is, the use of web 2.0 tools and, particularly, of social media and blogging).

During the last few years, public administrations around the world have embarked on open government initiatives and have worked to redefine their relationship with citizens and with each other. Some of them have even joined efforts and have taken part in networks such as the Open Government Partnership, which was launched in 2011 to provide an international platform for domestic reformers committed to making their governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens.

However, a review of the action plans undertaken in the framework of the Open Government Partnership shows that most of the initiatives have been implemented by governments (executive power), on one hand, and have focused on transparency and, to a lesser degree, on participation, on the other.

For one thing, several public institutions and agencies have designed and implemented important open government strategies and plans aimed at increasing transparency and citizen participation. This has not been the case in the justice field, despite the implementation of several initiatives world-wide, as Jiménez (2014) shows. However, the explicit recognition of the administration of justice both as a key component of the State of Law (it is one of the three powers) and as a public service has made evident

Table 1. Open government: principles, tools and related concepts

| Dimensions | Tools | Related Concepts |
|---------------|--------------------------|--|
| Transparency | Open data Open action | Information access Accountability Legitimacy and trust in government |
| Collaboration | Open data Open action | Interoperability Co-production (Social) innovation |
| Participation | Open data Open action | Consultation and deliberation with citizens Participation in decision-making processes Participation in public policy design |

Gascó, 2014.

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