Media ecosystems and open government: Toward better governance, increased citizen engagement and greater public trust

Agenda

Newseum
555 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington, DC 20001
Washington D.C

October 20, 2017

Media ecosystems and open government:

Toward better governance, increased citizen engagement and greater public trust

Overview of the agenda

10:00 – 10:30: Opening remarks

10:30 – 12:15: Parallel breakout sessions*
Breakout session 1: Helping governments navigate emerging media trends
Breakout session 2: Maximizing access to public sector information for citizens and journalists
*Coffee break to be determined by each group; refreshments will be available throughout the morning session

12:15 – 13:30: Lunch Break

13:30 – 14:00: Report and discussion of breakout sessions

14:00 – 15:45: Toward holistic solutions for strengthening media ecosystems

15:45 – 16:00 Conclusions and way forward

Context

The OECD recognizes the importance of good governance and open government[1] in generating the conditions for inclusive growth and sustainable socio-economic development.[2] More transparent, inclusive, responsive, and accountable governments improve the design and delivery of public policies and services by aligning them with citizens' needs and more effectively meeting their demands.

Analysis conducted through OECD Public Governance and Open Government Reviews, furthermore, shows that freedom of expression, access to information, and the presence of diverse and independent media organizations[3] are critical to improving public governance. Other international sources concur with this analysis. For example, the World Bank's World Governance Indicators "Voice and accountability"[4] scores are positively correlated to governance effectiveness (see Figure 1); similarly, Gallup's World Poll shows a positive correlation between citizens' trust in media organizations and trust in government (see Figure 2).

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[1] The OECD defines open government as "a citizen-centred culture of governance that utilizes innovative and sustainable tools, policies and practices to promote government transparency, responsiveness and accountability to foster stakeholders' participation in support of democracy and inclusive growth."

[2] The Governance of Inclusive Growth, OECD 2015 http://www.oecd.org/gov/governance-for-inclusive-growth.htm

[3] "Media organizations" can include various formats (radio, print, television and online) and institutional structures (such as state-owned / public broadcasters, private media and community media).

[4] Voice and Accountability (VA) scores capture the perceptions of the extent to which citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of media.

Figure 1. **Relationship between voice and accountability and government effectiveness**
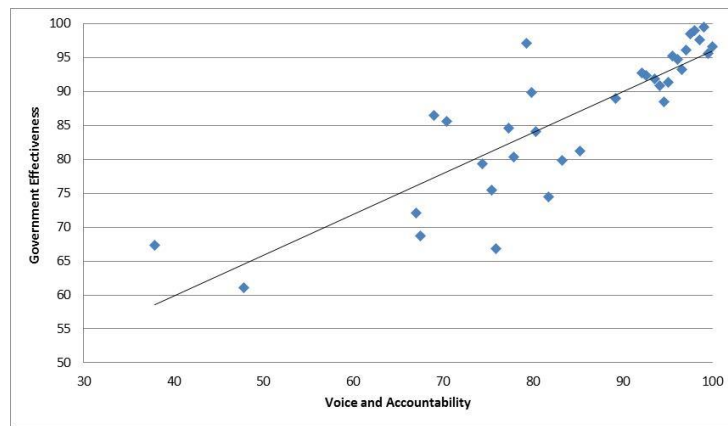
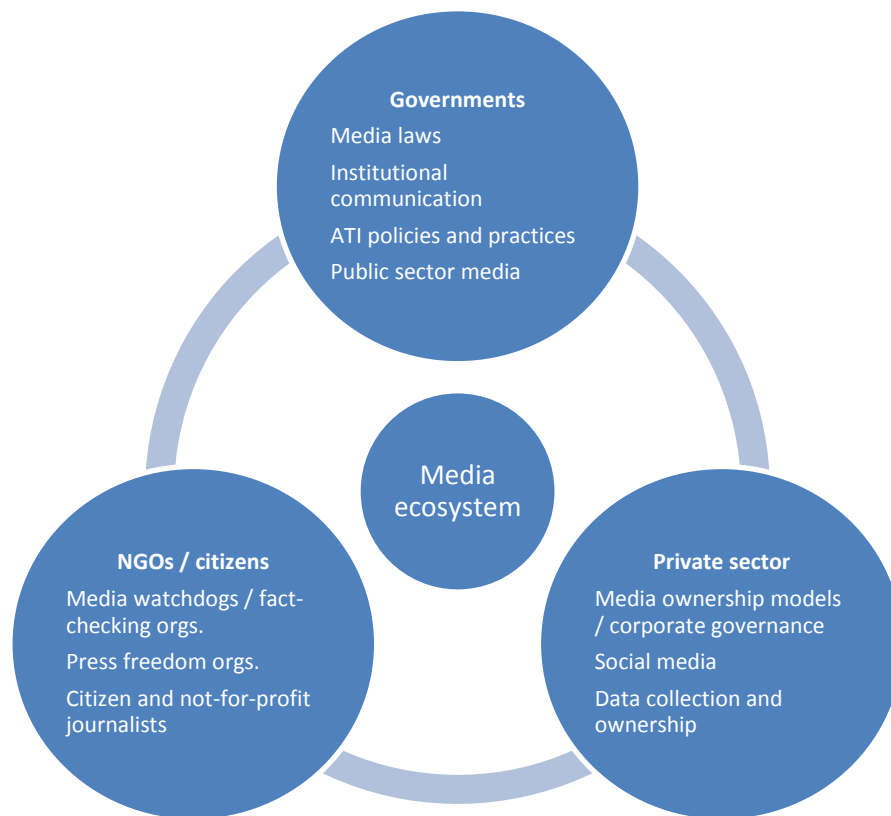*Source:* World Governance Indicators (database), 2015, World Bank, Washington, DC.

Figure 2: **Trust in the media and government:**

Comparison of confidence in national government and the media
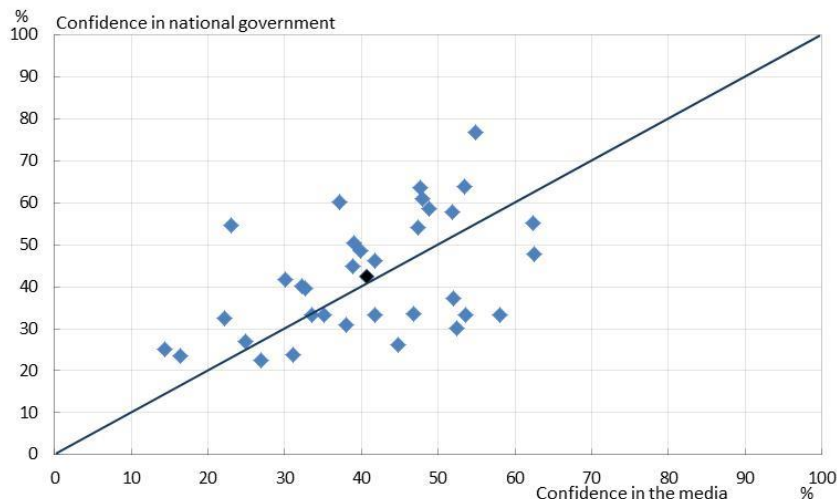
Source: GallupWorld Poll, 2013.

Despite the links between a diverse and independent media sector, enhanced citizen voice and greater government accountability, understanding the relationships between the relevant actors – including governments, public and private sector media, social media companies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and citizens – has not yet been addressed systematically or sufficiently. This conference, and the OECD's ongoing work in this field, will therefore increase the focus on how the characteristics of a country's information and media ecosystem, which includes media governance (i.e. institutional, legal, policy and regulatory frameworks), the actors (such as traditional media companies, new social media, and citizen journalists), their interactions, as well as the media landscape more broadly (including media ownership and financing models) (Figure 3), support the principles of transparency, responsiveness and accountability. Bringing together the actors that shape the media ecosystem will help improve the incentives, legal framework and political environment that support a media sector that serves the needs of society.
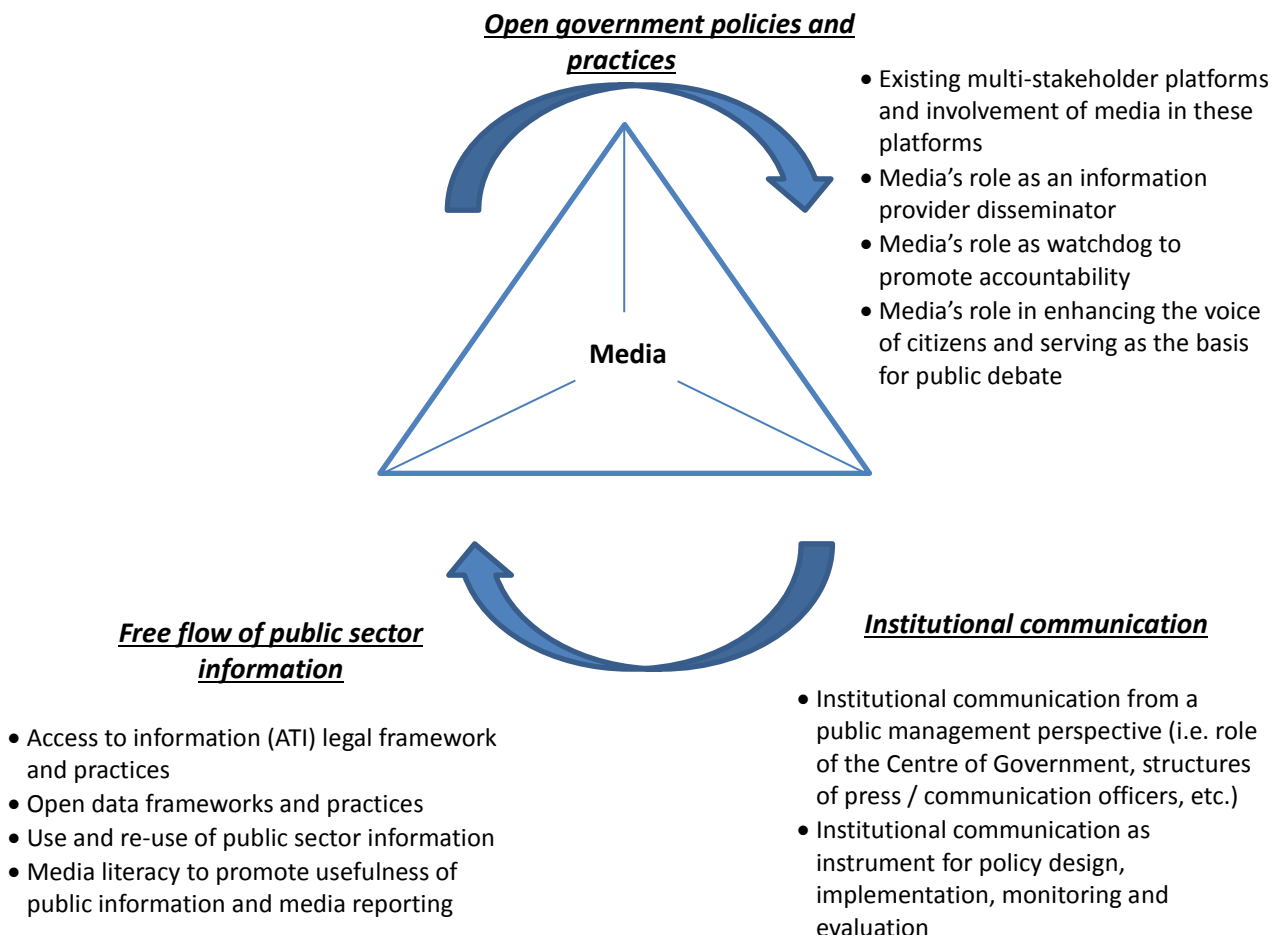
Figure 3: **Key actors and issues related to the media ecosystem**

Governments
Media laws
Institutional communication
ATI policies and practices
Public sector media

Media ecosystem

NGOs / citizens
Media watchdogs / fact-checking orgs.
Press freedom orgs.
Citizen and not-for-profit journalists

Private sector
Media ownership models / corporate governance
Social media
Data collection and ownership

Including all relevant actors in ongoing analysis and exchanges will also clarify the challenges facing media ecosystems, including media capture, technological disruption, business model failure, etc. Such challenges also include tensions faced by national governments in their efforts to respond to what are often international challenges, such as the spread of fake news, the role of social media in promoting populism, and the need to better understand the implications of private ownership of what are, in effect, public, international spaces for news dissemination and public debate.

While these are varied and connected issues, this conference and subsequent analysis will link the importance of an effective media ecosystem to the governance issues discussed above. In order to highlight how media ecosystems can reinforce the open government principles of transparency, responsiveness and accountability, the OECD will structure the agenda to focus on the three-pronged relationship between **open government policies and principles**, **institutional communication**, and **the free flow of public information** (Figure 4).

Figure 4**: Links between media ecosystems and open government principles**

Open government policies and practices

Media

- Existing multi-stakeholder platforms and involvement of media in these platforms
- Media's role as an information provider disseminator
- Media's role as watchdog to promote accountability
- Media's role in enhancing the voice of citizens and serving as the basis for public debate

Free flow of public sector information

- Access to information (ATI) legal framework and practices
- Open data frameworks and practices
- Use and re-use of public sector information
- Media literacy to promote usefulness of public information and media reporting

Institutional communication

- Institutional communication from a public management perspective (i.e. role of the Centre of Government, structures of press / communication officers, etc.)
- Institutional communication as instrument for policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation

Event objectives

This event will provide the occasion for representatives from governments, media organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organizations to discuss how to support a media ecosystem that promotes the open government principles of transparency, participation and accountability. Recognizing the need for voices from across multiple sectors to participate in this ongoing conversation, this event will serve as a **multi-stakeholder platform** for experts to share experiences, good practices and lessons learned. Moving forward, the OECD's goal is to continue to facilitate such interactions in order to strengthen the connection between governments, open government reformers, citizens and the media to ensure that the media can act as an independent voice contributing to open government principles and practices.

The results of the discussions during this event will help the OECD define the topics to be covered in its forthcoming data collection and qualitative analysis activities, which will be published as a contribution the wider debates on these topics.

Detailed agenda

10:00 – 10:30: Opening remarks

Shelby Coffey III – Vice Chair, Newseum

Douglas Frantz – Deputy Secretary General, OECD

10:30 – 12:15: Parallel breakout session 1:

Helping governments navigate emerging media trends

*Coffee break to be determined by each group; refreshments will be available throughout the morning session

Remarks:

Melissa Sayiner – Legal Officer, Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, Germany

Sergio Talamo – Director of Communication, Publishing, Transparency and Special Projects FormezPA, Ministry of Public Administration, Italy and **Francesco DiCostanzo** – President, PA Social, Italy: Video presentation *"New public communication, social media, and transparency: The experience of Italy"*

Holly Jensen – Director of Crisis Response, U.S. Department of State

Moderator:

Alessandro Bellantoni – Coordinator, Open Government Program, OECD

OECD research shows that only 40% of citizens trust their governments, which has costs for policy development and for governments' abilities to function effectively. Restoring trust in government is therefore high on the political agenda. Findings from OECD Public Governance and Open Government Reviews underline the importance of improving participation mechanisms to help strengthen trust in government and build social cohesion. This, in turn, relies in part on governments' use of effective and reliable institutional communication as a means of sharing information, engaging and creating support for public policies and reform efforts.

The topic of institutional communication is particularly important as more governments invest in working with civil society to create ambitious open government agendas to strengthen transparency, citizen participation and accountability. These efforts are, however, little known and rarely linked to countries' institutional communication approaches. The challenge facing governments is further compounded by the rapidly changing media environment, where traditional communication skills are not sufficient to ensure effective information provision and engagement with the public.

This breakout session will explore the tools and practices used by governments to communicate, engage with citizens and ultimately build trust, and will look at how governments can navigate new media models and opportunities presented by social media. This breakout session will cover institutional communications both through a public management perspective (by reviewing the tools and mechanisms used), as well as through the perspective of how communications can support policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in a way that reinforces open government principles. It will also explore how governments perceive and can begin to respond to the challenges presented by the rapidly evolving media landscape. Following brief introductory presentations, participants will be invited to reflect upon the following questions:

- *How can institutional communication best support accountability and public trust? What practices should guide government communication to promote transparency and*

engagement, and to respond to the challenges and opportunities provided by social media?

- *What are the challenges and opportunities facing governments with the private ownership of what are often public spaces for debate and information sharing?*

- *How can governments help encourage constructive public interaction and debate? For example, what role, if any, can governments play in counteracting the spread of fake news? What are the potential benefits for government support of media literacy? What role can public service broadcasters play?*

10:30 – 12:15: Parallel breakout session 2:

Maximizing access to public sector information for citizens and journalists

*Coffee break to be determined by each group; refreshments will be available throughout the morning session

Remarks:

James Deane – Director, Policy and Research, BBC Media Action *(Moderator)*

Emilene Martínez Morales – Americas Regional Civil Society Coordinator, Open Government Partnership Support Unit

Indira Lakshmanan – Newmark Chair in Journalism Ethics, Poynter Institute

Promoting the free flow of information depends on the willingness of governments to be transparent, as well as the ability of citizens to demand and interpret available information. A critical component supporting the free flow of information is the presence of access to information (ATI) and open data laws and initiatives, which media and civil society organizations, data journalists and citizens depend on and which are essential to strengthening government accountability.

Even though all OECD countries have ATI laws in place, and most implement open data initiatives, this session will focus on how the implementation of those laws and initiatives allow (or prevent) citizens and journalists to gain access to public information. In part, this is a question of the content of the relevant laws: their scope, whether they provide for anonymous requests and the use of online data platforms, what sorts of exceptions are included, and the response requirements (timing, methods, justifications, etc.). Additionally, however, the institutional structures supporting the implementation of the laws, differences in how various actors (media, citizens, civil society) use the laws and what impediments exist, such as the challenge presented by low public trust in media and governments alike, also play important roles in determining how well citizens are able to benefit from public information.

This breakout session will review issues related to the ability of journalists and citizens to access and take advantage of public information and data, including their ability to make use of ATI and open data laws, as well as to make the most of the opportunities provided by internet and communication technologies. In addition, the session will look at practices of both governments and private companies that enable (or prevent) the media and citizens from taking advantage of the free flow of information (such as ensuring internet freedom and transnational information data flows). These topics are particularly relevant in a context where technological innovations and the use of social media are expanding citizens' ability to participate in the media and communication environment and where the line between journalists and citizens is increasingly blurred. Following brief introductory presentations, participants will be invited to reflect upon the following questions:

- *Beyond the legal and policy framework and from the perspective of the users of public sector information, what can governments do to facilitate access to public information and*

strengthen access to information systems?

- *What is required for data journalism and citizen journalists to fully benefit from public data and information?*

- *What are the primary obstacles facing media organizations, NGOs and citizens in accessing information? How can the actors work together to identify mechanisms and incentives to encourage governments to increase the amount and usefulness of information, as well as to ensure the relevance and understanding of the information by citizens?*

12:15 – 13:30: Lunch Break

13:30 – 14:00: Report and discussion of breakout sessions

Rapporteurs from each group will present key findings and discussion points from the conversations to the plenary.

14:00 – 15:45: Toward holistic solutions for strengthening media ecosystems

Remarks:

Mark Nelson – Senior Director, Center for International Media Assistance *(Moderator)*

While mass media has traditionally provided a public sphere for debate and information sharing, the increasing choice of news formats and the rise of content production by the public through citizen journalism and social media have fragmented the media ecosystem. While such fragmentation has increased citizen voice and access to sources of information, it has also supported media outlets that cater to specific social, economic and ideological groups. The rise of fake news has further highlighted the question of how the ongoing changes in the media landscape impact a country's media ecosystem and its ability to inform citizens, promote participation and accountability, and thus inform public debate.

These are challenges being faced on a global scale. This session will therefore discuss potential responses to these issues, as well as how to facilitate the creation of alliances and collaboration mechanisms between governments, media actors, private companies and citizens to encourage inclusive public debate. Moving forward, creating effective mechanisms to discuss common approaches and policy responses that address the challenges of the changing media context will be increasingly important. Such mechanisms would also provide opportunities to build constructive relationships between key actors and identify additional areas of analysis and research, particularly around how the media can play a more active role in supporting open government policies, as those will be essential elements of strengthening public debate for democracy. Participants will be invited to reflect upon the following questions:

- *What impact are changes in the media and communication landscapes having on people's relationship with governments? How does this affect the open government agenda?*

- *How does the importance of social media for news consumption influence public debate, both positively and negatively? What are potential national government responses to what are often international challenges, such as fake news? How can media organizations, civil society and private companies help identify responses to these challenges?*

- *How can media organizations, citizens and governments best take advantage of the*

transparency and new forms of interactions afforded by social media and other new actors to encourage public debate?

- *What mechanisms are most effective in promoting co-operation between governments, civil society organizations and the media? What lessons might these experiences hold for improving collaboration on issues related to the media ecosystem?*

15:45 – 16:00 Conclusions and way forward

Douglas Frantz – Deputy Secretary General, OECD

For additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Craig Matasick:

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