

The Limits of Radical Networked Democratic Transparency: From WikiLeaks to OurSay

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Abstract

This paper offers insight into the shifting modes of participation in networked democracy, with specific interest in disclosure, and new ways of opening up governing. It presents both a theoretical background and concrete advice on how to design, implement, and measure innovative methods of governing through radical new modes of disclosing and disseminating information through digital networks. However, it first contextualises the democratic importance of radical transparency from historical comparative analysis of Hansard and Open Diplomacy to show how ‘new’ media in specific contexts afford specific shifts to institutions of governing. It then compares WikiLeaks to OurSay in order to extrude relevant policy prescriptions on planning, implementing and measuring the limits of innovative networked transparency in democratic processes.

Introduction

Citizen participation is a current imperative of democratic communications practice. Declining political engagement seen in lower levels of voter registration (Saha et al., 2005), low levels of trust in politicians and government (Bean, 2005), and declining membership of – and attachment to – political parties suggest rising political disengagement (Leigh, 2002). However, other studies note that political engagement appears to be changing rather than ‘declining’. For example, citizens are more likely to engage in non-electoral forms of political participation (e.g. demonstrations, petitions), and use the Internet as a medium/mode of political involvement (Dahlberg, 2011; Martin, 2012). Meanwhile, citizen organisations, political parties, national governments and supranational institutions are developing ‘participatory’ forms of decision-making that emphasise deliberation and open co-production to diverse actors (Vromen, 2008; Cammaerts, 2008; Macnamara, 2010). These participations offer new modes of democratic government openness and transparency.

The focus of this paper centres on considering the democratic implications of network-mediated transparency in the evolution of participatory democracy. The paper argues that networked and participative transparency processes represent a key tenet of the ongoing evolution of democratic political communication. However, these new forms of openness in the networked society are, at the same time, overrated and misunderstood. A critical review of the literature on transparency and governing identifies gaps for communications theory to fill. These gaps are addressed through interpretation of the historical precedents of radical transparency and original research on currently the extreme cases of OurSay and WikiLeaks. The goal is to create novel but practical strategies for incorporating ‘radical transparency’ into governing.

Approach

The first half of this paper is theoretical and historical. It defines expectations of democracy and transparency and relates them to ‘new’ media of the past that helped create new modes of transparency and governing. The second half of the paper examines networked modes of transparency and offers policy-centric analysis towards incorporating these modes of participatory transparency into democratic institutions. Specifically, the historical comparative analysis of Hansard and Open Diplomacy situates the importance of context, methods and results for projects that use ‘new’ media to create ‘new’ modes of governing with transparency.

That mode of analysis is updated to examine WikiLeaks through residual texts left by its founders and OurSay through primary in-depth interviews of its executive.

These mixed methods are used to ‘bricolage’ a picture that illuminates democratic lessons and the limits of radical participatory transparency projects. The data suggests that OurSay may be one of the first Australian mechanisms of participatory network governing that relies on a radical notion of transparency that can bend – but not break – current democratic norms. On the other hand, WikiLeaks is not presented as a capable and representative mediator to evolve the democratic process. WikiLeaks’ design of anonymity and anarchism discouraged citizen participation to an extent that made its democratic affordances untenable. The comparison of these cases and other examples outside Australia makes up the Discussion section. In conclusion, practitioners are presented with strategies to affect policy planning, execution, and measurement.

Defining media and transparency in the network

Understanding transparency requires defining democratic processes that create disclosure and understanding how this disclosure affects processes of democracy. Basic definitions of transparency convey a concept that makes organisational data public where it was previously not (Mitchell, 1998). This idea is usually delineated through either post-facto transparency of the event, or transparency in the actual governing processes themselves (Heald, 2006; Heald, 2012). The distinction between transparency of process and event delineates distinct expectations of democratic governing. However, Meijer (2012) explains that transparency creates a reflexive loop of vision and voice for citizens based around event and process transparency. He shows that transparency affects intra-organisational processes as citizens learn from event data that become visible. Accordingly, citizens express a new voice based on that event data which, in turn, shifts expectations of further events. The point Meijer et al. (2012) make is that transparency exposes *and* forms expectations of government conduct.¹

The concept of transparency can thus be put to diverse use in the policy arena. Roberts (2006: 194) suggests that ‘transparency’ that affects efficiency of growth in patterns of global economic development represents a different expectation to the rights-based usage of the term, which provides a process to mitigate those very effects of liberalisation. Specifically, he means that that ‘transparency’ can be used to open access to organisational decision-making processes and make them more easily influenced by a variety of actors. Thus, the concept of exposing and forming expectations of conduct offers a theoretically robust and politically useful definition of transparency. This definition also allows research to question the relationship between certain types of media and certain types of transparency. As I have argued elsewhere (Heemsbergen, 2013), transparency can be ‘radical’ in three dimensions. First, new mechanics of information capture and dissemination can denote a radical shift. Second, transparency is radical if it comes from a position that is outside the organisation to be made transparent. Finally, transparency

mechanisms that uproot one specific democratic philosophy to encourage another (e.g., deliberative for liberal) can be thought of as radical. Understanding these dimensions requires integrating media theory into transparency, as a way to explain how the political is imbued into disclosed information that governs when mediated through specific technologies.

As such, rather than a narrow ‘vehicle’ based definition of media, this paper defines media as ‘infrastructures’ that make and distribute content in forms that carry particular contexts with them (Couldry, 2012: 2). Examples can include right to information laws, whistle-blowing websites, treaties, and ‘government as platform’ experiments. A similar methodology to explain (new) media has also been utilised to create policy efficacy for political communication (Howard, 2006), and the mediated communication rights of democratic participation (Cammaerts, 2008). The insight of these approaches is that specific media, including ICT platforms, newsprint, or other complex ‘infrastructures’, afford specific political opportunities and limits. This paper simply explains affordances through the human-technology relationship that creates certain features that enable (afford) particular democratic uses and outcomes (Dahlberg, 2011: 3). By acknowledging the political affordances that media create, their role in participatory governing can be examined. Certain media afford specific expectations of what transparency does. The next two sections offer historical evidence and forward-looking advice to that effect.

History of (radical) Participatory Transparency

Radical transparency mechanisms have a documented history of allowing citizens to extend both their vision and voice in matters of government. The Hansard reports common to Westminster based Parliaments were born from illegal leaks in the 1770s. Soviet radicals initiated the concept

of Open Diplomacy in foreign affairs in 1918. In both these cases, radical ‘new’ media of the time played a decisive role in the reconfiguration of how societies used transparency to govern. Research on the context, methods and result of these two instances offer a historical basis to understand how the affordances of new media have been used to shift contexts of governing.

Hansard

The complex context of 18th Century England afforded a new socio-technological mechanism of transparency; this section relates the context, methods and events that shifted democratic practice. Parliamentary debates in Westminster were secret before 1771. Stasavage (2005) suggests that fears of legislator bias and poor representation encouraged the expanded publication of parliamentary debates in the 1700s. However, his analysis does not account for the changes to cultural and technological contexts. First, the ideational context of the Enlightenment created new hopes for improving human life. Also significant were the expanding intellectual property rights in late 18th Century England (Tallmo, forthcoming), that helped create a market with co-evolving printing capabilities (Briggs and Burke, 2009: 46). This context created an instance of radical transparency that challenged legislative secrecy in a specific way: competing groups of illegal pamphleteers saw a social *and* market opportunity to leak the debate of Members of Parliament.

The pamphleteers ‘reported’ on fictional political clubs with caricatured quasi-fictional MPs. Some pamphleteers were fined, but most escaped serious charges for such ‘fictitious’ accounts (Hansard, 1829). However, the radical parliamentarian John Wilkes, and the Mayor of London Brass Crosby conspired to end censorship of the Parliament by engineering parts of what is known as the Printer’s Case. The Mayor of London, Brass Crosby, protected a printer who

published un-redacted versions of the debates (Hansard, 1829: 58; Namier and Brooke, 1964: 278). Crosby was sent to the Tower of London for six weeks until Londoners' (riotous) support forced the House to free Crosby (Thomas, 1960; Noorthouck, 1773: 485-520). That same year, Wilkes guided the House to officially open a market for impartial accounts of representatives' debate (Thomas, 1960). With the legality of the issue decided, newspapermen incorporated the debates of Parliament into larger 'papers of record'. The institutionalisation of recording the proceedings of the Parliament of Great Britain continued as Thomas C. Hansard and his family created a virtual monopoly in the market. Years later, Parliaments themselves published this data and, out of habit and familiarity, the Hansard brand continues to adorn many official records of Parliamentary debates.

The results of publishing debates in this social-technological context and method reflected classic 'liberal' desirables of transparency. First, the utility of publishing the debates limited the arbitrary power of the Members of the House via a new discursive accountability. Second, examples of the democratic results of publishing the debates are explained by proponents of the time as decreasing asymmetries of information to better their constituents' own individual situation (Crosby, in Hansard, 1829). Leaking the debates in the context and methods available from the Enlightenment, evolving intellectual property markets and printing technologies, and the radical political efforts of both governors and members of the public, produced specific effects on and of government.

Secret Treaties and Open Diplomacy

The context, methods and results of Open Diplomacy created in 1918 provide a stark contrast to the hue of transparency of 18th Century England. As part of the Russian Revolution, an

unprecedented corpus of secret treaties was leaked by the Bolsheviks and disseminated to international publics. The 1917 November 23 editions of *Izvestia* and *Pravda* printed the first secret treaties. The treaties were reprinted in Britain, Central Power countries and across the Atlantic in the United States through national newspapers (Hudson, 1925). However, the significant change of technological context was the electrified public sphere's telegraph wires. According to historian Ray Stannard Baker, the telegraph transmitted new messages to lay publics around the world, in a fashion that challenged the orthodoxy of secret diplomacy "in the seventh of a second" that transmission required (Baker, 1923: 101). More recent commentators agree that the telegraphic 20th Century accelerated diplomacy while constraining diplomats' autonomy "under the wire" (Nickles, 2003). The context of the international public sphere, technological pressures of the wire, and Soviet desperation in wartime, combined for a specific result of massive 'teleleaks' of secret treaties around the globe.

The international reaction was swift and public. Commentators of the time suggested that the rapid global disclosure provoked a strong response of public opinion that shifted the war aims of the democracies (Hudson, 1925: 273; Baker, 1923: 39). By leaking the treaties to the wired-public, the Bolsheviks had opened the door to public debate on points of foreign policy. Woodrow Wilson's own radical peace terms, made famous by the first of 14 points ("open covenants, openly arrived at ... diplomacy in public view") were seen at the time *as a response to* the Open Diplomacy rhetoric of the Soviets (Mayer, 1959), albeit from a divergent ideological premise (Berridge and James, 2000).

The Allies' political and social context coupled with technological changes to afford reforms of governing through new forms of transparent rational deliberation. Public preferences for Open Diplomacy were prevalent in the "wired" public sphere before the Paris Peace Conference

(Mayer, 1959: 281-290). The Conference itself created a newfound deliberative space for “world opinion” (Baker, 1923: 2, 122), dismantling “old” diplomacy for the “new” era of diplomacy defined as “Publicity [over] Secrecy” (Kennedy and Salisbury 1922). The distinct normative goals and explicit institutionalisation of ‘new diplomacy’ coincide with deliberative notions of courting public opinion in the realm of foreign affairs. This was not a known democratic process before the Bolshevik leak of secret treaties. The leak, and its mediation, shows how radical transparency can expose and inform expectations of democratic governing.

The different contexts and methods of Hansard and Open Diplomacy offered up different results for governing. Hansard limited the power of the state, while Open Diplomacy increased deliberation between governors, their publics and international publics. These results of transparency show clear differences of how governors were expected to conduct their governing. These differences have as much to do with the social and political differences of the time as the technological ones. For instance, the Enlightenment provides a stark contrast to the end of World War I. However, distinct technological contexts and methods combined with the social-political contexts to produce specific affordances. The telegraph, and the international connectedness of empires, afforded international public opinion to be wired around the world and reverberate in the ears of leaders at the Paris Peace Conference. To clarify that (even digital) technology does not determine available affordances of transparency projects, the paper will now examine the multiple affordances of WikiLeaks’ technological platform. The sections on WikiLeaks and OurSay both explicitly break out headings of context, methods and results for clarity.

WikiLeaks

Context

The launch of WikiLeaks allows examination of how affordances are created in distinct socio-technological contexts. An anarchical student house in Melbourne, and the anarchistic cypherpunk ideology of its occupant, provided the context for the birth of WikiLeaks. Julian Assange believed that new media technology and cryptography afforded ways to invert the power of secrets into democratic good (Assange, 2006a). He claimed organisations that remain in control based on secrets would stop sharing knowledge and dis-integrate if their secrets were involuntarily leaked *en masse* (Assange, 2006b). The journalist Andy Greenberg sees networked media, cryptography and user-generated content as contexts that will inevitably create the “machines” that steal secrets (Greenberg, 2012). The cultural-technological context of WikiLeaks in 2006 combined instant network connectivity with the anarchy of involuntary and anonymous disclosure. It produced a specific resistance to authoritarianism that expected the conduct *of* an organisation to be in the open. However, anarchism was not the (only) affordance of WikiLeaks.

Methods

The ‘Wiki’ platform has a proven track record for encouraging engagement and rational discourse (see Tapscott and Williams, 2006). Part of the reason that Assange chose a Wiki-based project to mediate his transparency information was the civic success and popularity of the Wikipedia project (Assange, 2007). The context of community that surrounded Wikipedia led to strong norms of specific modes of deliberation and organisation (Tkacz, 2012). WikiLeaks may have hoped to mirror these processes and successes, as well as mirror the ‘brand’ of opening contribution to government. We should remember that Assange’s original manifesto did not call to end governance, but to destroy “bad governance”, and “foment strong resistance to authoritarian planning” while creating “powerful incentives for more humane forms of

governance” (Assange, 2006a: 6). If improving governance was the goal, a wiki-based system of disclosure was the method that Assange thought would be most effective. However, its design had conflicting approaches. The anonymous contributions and contributors offered a different context from the wiki of Wikipedia (and Tapscott’s more general) civic ideal. Further, governing powers were explicitly excluded from the wiki-deliberation on WikiLeaks. The results of this radical transparency mechanism shifted democratic debate from legitimate channels to ones that negated legitimate power structures. This is evidenced by WikiLeaks’ goal of creating its own intelligence agency to “subsidise [its own] investigative journalism” (WikiLeaks, 2008).

However, WikiLeaks could not escape its own paradox of a wiki-based leaking apparatus ostensibly being created to improve democracy, yet deforming transparency to an anarchic vigilantism. In one sense, the deliberative Wiki technology fulfilled a need of equal voice in discerning the frameworks that govern. However, issues of anonymity and exclusion of those in power created affordances that denied it the legitimacy of representative democratic systems. WikiLeaks’ transparency project ‘designed-in’ certain constraints of context and method that, coupled with the available technology, led to specific affordances of democratic governing. The paradox offers evidence towards social-cultural context integrating with technology to create diverse affordances.

Results

The lasting results of WikiLeaks are complex. It has been described as a naïve failure of nominal transparency and ineffective governance (Roberts, 2012). On the other hand, how leaked documents were covered in the press and correlated with shifts of electoral votes in Kenya (2007), radical financial policy in Iceland (2009-2011), exposing probable tax fraud at the Julius Baer Bank (2008), and obviating super-injunctions in the English press. WikiLeaks proponents claim

these news stories as alternative metrics of success. However, WikiLeaks' importance is not measured here in the content of its disclosures, nor its antagonistic stance of resistance to power; both these aspects are becoming historical referents. Instead, this paper proposes that by operating as a network that opened questions of government, WikiLeaks foreshadowed the decentralised reality of evolving politics of disclosure and deliberation in networked democracies.

OurSay

This section applies the analytic frame of context, methods and results to the Australian organisation OurSay, after a general introduction to the organisation. Interview data are used to map and critique the extent that OurSay positions itself as creating a transparent 'citizen's agenda' for political and media agents to respond to. Questions of OurSay's effects on policy and issue discourse present opportunities for continued research, but are outside the scope of the current paper. Data on OurSay was gathered from semi-structured interviews with the CEO and technical lead of OurSay in early 2013, as well as basic quantitative metrics of engagement. These data suggest that OurSay represents another possible mode of intersection between transparency and network-mediated channels of democratic exchange.

OurSay purports to create a mode of networked transparency that affords evolution of democratic processes. OurSay creates transparency in the governing process when opinions and issues of citizens that would have otherwise remained 'secret' within the networked public are disclosed in new, networked forums that include citizens, governors, and broadcast media. Specifically, OurSay reports it is in business to open up "how we inform our government". OurSay's methods of disseminating information between citizens and governors are mechanically radical compared to similar projects before it. OurSay crowdsources issues of concern, and 'funnels' them to politicians under the spotlight of its growing online community and the support

of major news partners. The process allows online users to create questions of concern and let the crowd 'up-vote' them. A subset of the most popular questions are then addressed in real life by a politician or expert at an agreed upon 'town hall' type event. The combination of networked communities and 'in real life' forums provides new mechanics of disclosing information and creating democratic processes with it. OurSay identifies this process as pushing citizens onto the Internet, and then back off it. This process/event represents a novel inversion of the concept of transparency, exposing citizen desires to political organisation. Further, OurSay opens the process of government to be more easily influenced by a variety of actors in the hopes of constituting an agenda of the citizens for the governors.

OurSay positions itself as an entrepreneurial business outside the institutions of the representative government it tries to open. This makes it radical by position. The founders of OurSay identified a gap between institutions such as parliament, the party system, public opinion, 'mainstream media' and citizen concern. They created a business model that allowed them to remain outside traditional institutional processes, even as OurSay influenced these processes. Although the transparency remains voluntary (unlike WikiLeaks' positionally radical project), it does force the hand of politicians to show up at the town hall forms, lest voters be met by an empty chair.

OurSay is also politically radical in that it opens new modes of exchange with elected politicians. These modes of exchange engender specific expectations about governing that may uproot parliamentary norms that expect interactions to occur between voters and politicians. Instead, citizens and government interact in a process that opens governing to make 'issues of citizen concern' readily apparent. Citizens' issues are algorithmically prioritised, and offered to the government in frames of accountability. In this sense, OurSay strives to make organisational

decision-making more easily influenced by a variety of actors, as described by Roberts (2006: 194) as a goal of transparency. Thus the business of opening up ‘how we inform our government’ through the network is a radical one measured on mechanics, position and politics. The ‘radical’ nature of OurSay will now be analysed in terms of context, methods and its tentative results.

Context

The context of the OurSay project includes elements of business logic. OurSay’s structure is incentivised to solve market problems. The identified market opportunity concerned the question of “how do we inform our government” for citizens that wish to contribute to government in the networked world. OurSay attempts to provide a synergistic solution for the interrelated (democratic) problems of seemingly unaccountable politicians, horserace journalism that does not consider the concerns of citizens, and a level of apathy from the citizens themselves. OurSay’s executive offers its solution to the disenchantment in three ways. First, politicians are offered more agency to respond to their constituents in “regular accountability sessions”. Second, it hopes to shape media coverage to address moments of “grassroots” concern expressed online, and build these towards contextualised citizen agendas communicated by journalists to politicians. Third, its participatory design entices members of the public to show ownership of their issue by engaging other members of the public in a political “network ground-game” to ensure their issue remains salient to politicians and media.

This last point is crucial to understanding how OurSay comprehends and exploits the affordances of what its CEO identifies as “new media communication”. According to OurSay, new media communication affords “hooks to each other” in a network of “mediums”. The network affords greater connectivity not only between politicians and citizens, but between

mediums themselves. Facebook, Twitter and OurSay were all relayed as examples of specific mediums that could connect to each other. OurSay views this connectivity as a key aspect that allows its community to build to a “point of inflection” that demands new modes of informing government.

Methods

OurSay’s methods of engagement are designed to first identify and engage with key civic leaders within the communities OurSay has been hired to target. OurSay relies on these citizens (and pressure groups) to advocate their issues within the OurSay online platform and its viral affordances as explained above. It also relies on the support of incumbent governors and their desire to find media airtime. OurSay considers itself an entity that offers politicians a method to “funnel the social” into forums that are broadcast across mainstream media.

These methods can be captured with some rudimentary quantifiable measures of OurSay’s success. In 2013 OurSay boasted an online community of 57,000 that contributed 4,800 questions to be answered and resulted in 37 real life meet-ups. The average community member has voted on OurSay questions four times. The meet-ups ranged in size from a handful to a few hundred citizen participants. In the final meet-ups, the participants confronted a range of governors, ranging from mid-level bureaucrats to the Prime Minister of Australia.

Results

One result OurSay hopes to create is a reflexive change in citizens who become connected to new interactions with fellow citizens and governors. Some participants perform new political actions of ‘up-voting’ certain questions or writing new questions themselves. This act of self-disclosure is a form of transparency that creates a reflexive change in citizens and governors.

Citizens are empowered to advocate their questions amongst their networks, while governors become weary of not addressing populist concerns. Further, the participants create new expectations of what political engagement should be for themselves, and their leaders. Governors, on the other hand, must shift their approach to communication risk. Communication risk tied to a self-organising network that makes populist desires transparent requires new strategies. OurSay is planning initiatives that may offer assessment of these risks. Future research will enable and measure any substantive democratic impact of the OurSay model in the 2013 Australian National election.

Discussion of Policy Implications

Thus far, this paper has described theoretical concerns and explained the affordances of democratic transparency experiments. It first related the concept of transparency to governing and reviewed historical transparency cases of radical transparency that transformed democratic governing. It then specifically focused on the different contexts, methods and results of the networked transparency projects, WikiLeaks and OurSay, and their attempts to radically shift democratic practices. This section discusses the policy limits of shifting democratic practice through networked transparency. OurSay and WikiLeaks are referenced as instrumental cases to offer insight to the limits of networked transparency as a tool of democratic governing. The three sections below provide guidance on design, implementation and measurement of innovative, networked participatory governing projects.

Design before you proceed

To design new, networked interactions between citizens and their leaders, practitioners must determine the normative and technological context of both citizens and their governors. Too often specific affordances of technology are assumed across different contexts. The example of WikiLeaks shows a massive gap between the anarchic discussions of secrets on WikiLeaks.org, and ‘designed-out’ centres of power. This gap created a disconnect between power and process of discussion for the policies that were being disclosed. Another example (not) matching normative and technological contexts is found in Canada. In 2006 the Government of Canada created foreign policy eDiscussions that were accessible online (see Heemsbergen, 2008). However, Canada targeted these discussions to academics and expert NGOs through writing briefing material in complicated policy prose and moderating discussions against off-topic citizen concerns. OurSay on the other hand, seems to be designed to balance differing expectations of technology through mass media working in conjunction with networked media. Further, social contexts are mixed to combine expectations of voting, discussion, viral advocacy and old-fashioned ‘town halls’ designed to hold power to account and encourage new engagements. OurSay courts both networked social discussion and institutions of representative power and mass communication.

A second concern of design for practitioners is whether goals include both participation and political innovation. This means deciding whether transparency is being used to further engagement and efficiency, or uproot current expectations of how governments conduct themselves. The final step in designing successful networked transparency projects involves reviewing the technological ‘methods’ and ‘results’ to ensure that they align with the decided upon contexts and goals. For example, WikiLeaks’ anonymous deliberation aligned with some goals of affording leaks to be shared, but its contributors’ anonymity did not afford a rationalising

deliberation, or funnel to politicians. The platform that OurSay uses caters towards ‘median’ voters and activists, while creating quantifiable communities that are of interest for organisations and politicians to message.

When Implementing...

The implementation phase considers institutional plasticity and co-design. Creating institutions with some ability to adapt and show plasticity in function and form can acknowledge and engage emergent gaps between diverse normative democratic assumptions. The goal should be to allow institutions to recognise, rather than resist, new modes of governing. Plasticity also allows governors to experiment with incorporating radical modes of citizen governing into current institutionalised practice. The idea is to remix radical ideas into government practice rather than reject them outright for being radical in position or politics. Co-design refers to implementing technology solutions that are built with a variety of actors. This may frustrate optimal modes of executing and managing projects, but is crucial to ensuring wide breadth and depth of ownership and uptake of the projects. OurSay may provide a nascent example of co-design. The OurSay media ‘structure’ incorporated the expectations of major media, grassroots enunciations, and politicians’ need for audiences and – through these in conjunction – attempts to create a new form of governing. As such, OurSay is attempting to provide a mode of monitoring government as a new way of evolving expectations onto government. Another example of this principle was found in the Icelandic constitution reform. In 2012, a representative sample of citizens literally co-designed a new constitution through deliberation and relayed progress through social media sites. This media ‘structure’ was laborious even for the small nation of 300,000, but its constitution was written in a few months and will undergo a ratification vote in 2013.

Success?

Measuring the success of networked transparency projects can be difficult without lengthy and expensive longitudinal studies that incorporate random controlled trialsⁱⁱ. However, practical goals applicable to all practitioners include metrics that incorporate normative, efficiency and efficacy measures. Measuring normative democratic innovation asks, “did we uproot poor prior assumptions about democracy in this context?” Normative critique encourages experimentation and innovation to break free from political assumptions. Measuring efficiency in democratic innovation asks, “did we use the minimum resources required to engage with the public to garner the desired results?” Efficiency will, of course, continue to be a major indicator of whether policy is viable. Measuring efficacy for democratic change involves asking, “were there changes of behaviour, and did they persist over time?” The pioneering work of Guy Grossman (2013) shows how longitudinal measurements of random control trials can be used to measure the effects of decentralising information about government and governors. Future research of information engagement in Australia should, to the extent possible, incorporate the research design elements of iterating trials of democratic participation, transparency and openness.

Conclusion

This paper has given a brief insight into the shifting modes of participation in networked democracy, specifically with interest to disclosure and new ways of opening up governing. It presented theoretical background and concrete advice on how to design, implement and measure innovative methods of governing through new modes of disseminating information through the network. These modes involved networked participation of citizens who were radical in mechanic, position and political expectation. However, governments should encourage and guide these experiments towards effective democratic processes and institutions. The Australian

government, and its population, has the unique ability to expand on the nascent successes of OurSay by considering how to institutionalise its methods, much like Hansard and Open Diplomacy in the past. This process should be expected to be difficult and laborious. However, if radical mechanisms of transparency are not incorporated into the institutions of democratic government, they will continue to exist – and evolve – outside of democratic government.

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¹ I am indebted to Foucault's understanding of government as the conduct of conduct, however a sufficient theoretical engagement is outside the scope of this paper.