



Types of government-society relations:

Enabling government, open government, adaptive government, responsive government

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Brief:

Enabling Government is a term that tries to express the changing orientation of the state in the recent decades. It means that instead of the state supplying the social rights involved in citizenship, it ensures that the conditions, resources and opportunities for the citizen's welfare exist, so that the individual may help himself, without being a burden on the state. The idea is to offer **public support** to fields that are the **individual's responsibility** (such as employment, health, education, etc). This is a social policy that lays responsibility for improving the individual's status both on the individual and on the state.

Creating the model contains four processes that run simultaneously: privatization, decreasing public expenses, employment and social cohesion. The state privatizes some of its services towards the citizen, decreases the public expenses, for instance, investing in preventing distress instead of treating it, switches over from welfare to workfare and changes its connections with the individual in a way that creates more social connections. The concept of an enabling state/government defines most industrialized states today, including Israel. The enabling government model obligates a broad and strong civil society upon which the state can lean. This model leaves the policy-determining and planning authority as well as oversight in the hands of the





state, while a large portion of executing policy is transferred to the “community”, i.e., individuals, associations and organizations and the corporate sector.

Adaptive Government is the ability of a government to efficiently and quickly deal with crises and the changes reality imposes. The government must propose appropriate legislation for changing circumstances. In order to do that, it must be highly adaptive, so that it may be successful in proposing appropriate legislations to answer new challenges as they arise. In order to succeed at this, the flexibility of the public sector must be increased, which in turn will increase its ability to act to bring change to strategic policy in order to bring to the quick restoration of society and/or the economy. Flexibility in the public sector is expressed in the human, organizational, procedural and service aspects. Creating change entails changing people’s attitudes, creating new knowledge and using rarely used knowledge (for instance, scientific knowledge), as well as cooperating with various sectors outside the government, such as the civil and corporate sectors, but also including the cooperation of “regular” people in the decision making process, alongside the authorities and policy makers on the different levels.

Achieving flexibility in the public sector is dependent on changing behavior patterns in the public sector, on organizational changes, delegating responsibilities, decreasing financial and regulatory hoops, and on changing the way services are supplied to citizens (increasing competition and adding other sources as service providers). Finding an effective solution to a problem must first include an adequate definition of the nature of the problem and necessitates steady, multi-faceted and long-term intervention. A further challenge is that governments must propose solutions for crises without increasing their expenditure.

Open Government means citizens have more significant participation in the democratic process. Such participation requires knowledgeable participants and therefore an open government means implementing transparency principles and affording citizens access to information and documents regarding the government’s activities. This transparency encourages responsibility on the side of the government,





improves service to the public, acts as a form of regulation on the governments' activities and reduces governmental corruption. The values of the open government define all democratic countries in the world, including Israel.

The idea that the public has the right to examine the government and participate in the governing is an old idea which originated in the 18th century Enlightenment, and is enshrined in the United States Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America. At the same time, the practical definitions of the term continuously evolve, based on technological advances that allow or require different approaches. Today people discuss the term Government 2.0 (borrowed from Web 2.0). The meaning is that of a government that uses social media. Many democratic countries today are adopting the idea, out of recognition of the fact that this leads to direct, honest and unprecedented dialogue between citizens and the government. Use of such technologies may improve the dialogue between citizens and the government, may upgrade the citizens' participation level in the political process, guaranteeing wider governmental transparency.

Responsive Government is a government that reacts and responds to the public's mood, is attuned to it and includes it as policy-formulating process. Citizens today have much higher expectations than of governments in the past. They also want to take an active part in the government work. Because of this, a basic change was created in the leadership culture, in the effort to create high-quality relationships between the government and the public: (1) the government is more attentive to the public's sentiments and demands and includes more factors in the policy formulating stage. (2) Consolidating the concept that the citizen is in the center means providing the public with services that are better, more decent, more accessible and more understandable. Technology allows making the services more accessible, placing them online (e-government).

A responsive government is a government that seeks advice from the public as a part of formulating policy. The purpose of this advisement is to improve the public policy as well as the leadership's legitimacy. Governments today understand more and more





that they can't effectively execute and implement policy if the citizens don't understand or support that policy. Responsivity means coordinating with the public and taking its suggestions under advisement while formulating and implementing public policy and public services. At the same time, this advisement with the public is not meant to be a replacement for the traditional representative democracy or the government's and parliament's role in the policy-formulating stage, rather, it is there to supplement it. Oftentimes it is easier and more appropriate to coordinate with citizens and consult with them during the decision making process on the local level as opposed to the national level. Several significant obstacles stand in the way: (1) Financing: this is an expensive procedure that must have adequate financing allocated to it. (2) Demand: it is hard to conduct efficient counseling if the public is not interested in participating. (3) Transparency: the authorities must publish information regarding the process, its findings and the authority's subsequent response.

Relations between the four terms

	Policy making and planning	Execution	Oversight
Enabling Government	Government's responsibility	Cooperation with the civil society and corporate sector	Government's responsibility
Adaptive Government	Cooperation with the civil society and corporate sector	Cooperation with the civil society and corporate sector	Cooperation with the civil society and corporate sector





Open Government	Cooperation with the public and civil society	Government's responsibility	Cooperation with the public and civil society
Responsive Government	Cooperation with the public, civil society and the corporate sector	Government's responsibility	Government's responsibility

The terms which will be covered maintain connections among each other in three main aspects which each term refers to: policy making and planning, policy execution and policy execution oversight. If the basic approach is that of a government that does everything and is responsible for the three aspects we mentioned, we can see the way each of the four terms relates to this approach, and what is the essence of difference and change that each term proposes. The table below clarifies each term relation to the three aspects.

We can see from the table that the aspect of policy making and planning is shared by nearly all approaches, aside from that of the Enabling Government. The approaches of Open Government, Adaptive Government and Responsive Government all assume the position that there is a need to have the public get much more involved in the decision making, policy making and planning process. The public refers to the citizens themselves, as well as civil society organizations and the corporate sector.

The approaches of Enabling Government and Adaptive Government both share the position that the public (again, including the civil society and the corporate sector) should take a more active part in the aspect of policy execution. The difference between the two approaches is that the Enabling Government retains the full responsibility over planning policy and oversight, while the Adaptive Government opines that these responsibilities should be held in tandem with the public.





The approaches of the Open Government and the Adaptive Government share the position that the public should be involved in the oversight of policy execution, while the Responsive Government and Enabling Government don't refer to that aspect and leave it solely the government's responsibility.

There is a tight relationship between Open Government and the Responsive Government. An open government must also be responsive, meaning, providing solutions for new ideas, demands and needs that rise from the public. Openness does not refer solely to transparency, but also to responsivity and accessibility, whose goal is to create a better relationship between the government and the public which it serves.

1. Enabling Government:

The term “enabling state” was coined by Gilbert and Gilbert in 1989, in their book “The Enabling State: Modern Welfare Capitalism in America”. Following their research on the American welfare policy and the changes that it went through, Gilbert and Gilbert claimed that the approach of Enabling Government had long before inherited the concept of the welfare state (Gilbert and Gilbert 1989). Although the term grew in order to describe the fundamental change in the welfare policies of the United States and Great Britain, it does define what is happening in all industrial nations since the ‘80s (Gilbert 1999:7).

The term “enabling state” is one of a list of terms which try to express the changing orientation of the state in recent decades. “Enabling State” means that instead of the state supplying the social rights implicit in citizenship (guaranteed income, unemployment, housing, education health services, and the like) on its own, it makes sure to give these conditions, resources and opportunities for the citizens' welfare. A welfare state is effectively replaced with new arrangements. Social services change and transfer from the direction of a welfare state to the direction of a workfare state. The approach is also that the market and civil society should be allowed to take an expanded role in providing the social protection. The idea is to propose **public**





support while using means such as work incentives or tax benefits, to fields that **are the private citizen's responsibility** (Gilbert 1999:10).

The approach of an enabling state expresses the fundamental change that occurred in welfare states in the industrialized world. In effect, this is a liberal social policy that lays the responsibility for improving the individual's status both on the individual and on the state, and does not see the state's job as aiding individuals in distress under all circumstances. The approach is that the state should create the conditions through which the individual can help himself, without becoming a burden on the state. In order to create better and more equal conditions that will give the individual the chance to succeed in life, the state works cooperatively with "the community", meaning, with individuals and neighborhood boards, with organizations and societies that comprise the civil society and with corporate bodies. What this means is that the state does not see one of its tasks as being solely responsible for **executing** policy and transfers a large part of the social services it used to supply to the care of other organizations, some of whom are for-profit organizations. The state continues bearing responsibility for the policy making process as well as oversight of policy, but is not responsible for implementing the policies. An enabling state therefore needs a large and active civil society on which it can lean. The state cooperates with various organizations, either non-profit or for-profit, so that they may supply services instead of the state. For instance, the Israeli Education Ministry allows franchisees to provide educational programs or long school days at kindergartens and schools, under the Ministry's supervision.

Of course, the "enabling state" does not neglect important social services such as Social Security, healthcare, disability funds, public aid, guaranteed income or daycare. At the same time, these systems evolve in a different environment of social policy. This policy is decided both by demographic and market powers, and whose normative assumptions at its core are essentially different than those that stood at the core of the welfare state that existed until the '80s (Gilbert, 1999:21).





Gilbert (1999) claims that four simultaneously running processes are implicit in creating the ideal model of an enabling state: privatization, decreasing public expenses, employment and social cohesion:

Privatization: Instead of supplying the individual with social goods, the state will subsidize him, in the form of money or coupons, in order to help him acquire these goods (for instance, rental aid coupons instead of public housing). The market logic is expressed in that the state appeals to the individuals financial logic: it will work so that it is more lucrative for him to go out and work (for example, with tax cuts), and will allow him to make important decisions (regarding housing location, for instance) while taking advantage of a competitive market.

Decreasing Public Expenses: Decreasing public expenses will be done in several ways: making social rights dependant on commitments; privatization which works under the assumption that the private sector is more active than the public sector; acknowledging certain expenses for tax purposes; allocating benefits to the eligible only instead of basing it on universal eligibility. In order to decide who are the neediest and the most eligible, rights will be linked with incentives and sanctions such as agreeing to accept a job, performing community service, participating in training workshops and more.

Employment: Instead of giving public support, the enabling state bases more on the individual's participation in society, especially in the work force. The objective is to help the unemployed enter the work force and help those with low income increase their income on their own. The incentives to work grow while chances of staying unemployed shrink. Activating the "Wisconsin Plan" in Israel is an example of the method in which this is done.

Social Cohesion The enabling state strives for a change from citizenship to membership in a group. The state's role as the social services provider shrinks while the demand for the individual to work and be independent grows. Due to this, the base for social cohesion traverses from the state to the private market and to the civil society that is made up of voluntary organizations and informal networks of family





and friends. As the connections between the individual and the state grow looser, the connections, or “the glue” which connected to individual to their associative groups grows (Gilbert 1999:22-24).

While the origin of the term “enabling state” lies in the liberal social approach that defined right-wing political stances (in the United States and Great Britain), later on it was adopted also by the left-leaning side of the political spectrum, Tony Blair’s Labour government in Great Britain, for example. In October of 2000, British Member of Parliament David Blunkett, then Secretary of State for Education and Employment in Blair’s government, gave a speech at Britain’s Policy Studies Institute. The speech’s title was “Enabling Government: The Welfare State in the 21st Century”. In this speech, Blunkett explained what an enabling government was and what it meant with regards to welfare policy.

The approach of the enabling government means that the government does not need to do things **for** people or **instead** of them, rather it does things **with** them. It must help people help themselves. The government should be the enabling force: it must supply the resources, lay the foundations and guarantee the equal opportunities that will allow this to happen. The idea, Blunkett claimed, is that people must be encouraged and supported, thereby allowing them to successfully deal with their lives, instead of trying to do it for them. The enabling government is not meant to be a “security net” that will catch a person in distress, as is common in welfare states, rather – the government must **prevent** the distress.

The method in which one can prevent the decline into distress is through breaking the “magic circle of poverty” by offering opportunities, even from as soon as the beginning of a person’s life. The government’s job is to create equal opportunities, for instance, in education services that will be truly equal and will offer people fair chances. The government must go into all systems that affect people in critical stages of their lives: education, health and employment are several of the most important systems in this context. Blunkett used a familiar saying in this context: “If you teach a





man to fish, he can then fish for himself”. In other words, it is a policy that demands a high initial investment of resources which should later on prove its profitability.

Blunkett referred to another central aspect of the enabling government, the fact that the government will no longer work solely with the person in distress, but will also work with entire families and neighborhoods. The goal is to find a way for the community and the government to succeed together in basing a mechanism through which people can determine their own fate, work and determine their family’s future. The government will supply the proper conditions that will afford each man a fair chance at life. At the same time, the individual also bears the responsibility of taking proper advantage of the resources at his disposal in order to allow himself to live with honor. According to Blunkett, the political environment of our days challenges the continued existence of the welfare state, and therefore the demands to receive recompense from the individual is both demanded and required from a political perspective.¹

The approach of an enabling state/government also defines the Israeli welfare state. In a 2008 publication of the Prime Minister’s Office’s Policy Planning Wing, then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert wrote:

*The modern government is an **enabling government** [my emphasis, H.Z.]. It is its duty to encourage processes that donate to the public welfare, and especially remove pitfalls from their path. It is clear that we as a government do not have ownership over knowledge, and it is appropriate that we include more elements in the decision making process. It is also clear that today many elements that are not a part of the governmental mechanism succeed in providing greater services*

¹ David Blunkett’s speech may be found at the following link:
<http://www.psi.org.uk/events/blunkett.pdf>





than what the government supplies. In such a reality, cooperation between the sectors is a necessary and essential thing.²

Olmert refers in his comments to the extensive cooperation between the government and the corporate sector and the civil society. This derives from the fact that in order to implement the concept of an enabling government, there is need for a large and active civil society and cooperation with “the community”. In contrast to David Blunkett, Ehud Olmert does not refer to the individual and his close surroundings as elements the government works with, rather he refers to organizations – councils as well as corporate bodies, that will enter the execution aspect of the government’s work.

On February 14, 2011, British Prime Minister David Cameron gave his “Big Society” speech³. In this speech, Cameron expressed an approach that was very similar to Olmert’s approach. Cameron claimed that more power and control should be given to people so that they may improve their lives and their communities. According to Cameron, in order to create a “big society”, three steps must be taken. First, more power should be given to the local municipalities and their sub-levels so that people can have more power and will have the ability to do more. Second, the government must open public services and make them less monolithic, so there is room for individual and organizational initiatives. Third, philanthropy, charity and volunteering must be encouraged. From Cameron’s perspective, this isn’t a world view whose sole objective is to cut public expenses, though this is definitely one of the goals, rather its goal is to build a greater and stronger society. Although the civil society is obviously not a new concept, as far as Cameron is concerned, what is new is the government’s recognition that it does not have all the answers and that it has defined itself a goal of doing all it can in helping citizens build a stronger society. Here too, when we talk

² Prime Minister’s Office, Policy Planning Wing (2008). The Government of Israel, the Civil Society and the Corporate Community: Partnerships, Empowerment and Transparency. Policy Paper, Jerusalem, February 2008.

³ To read the speech, see the following link: <http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/pms-speech-on-big-society/>





about “citizens”, we especially mean corporate bodies and organizations, or in other words, everything that isn’t “The State”.

As we can see, the idea of an enabling government also leans on another approach that is gaining traction these days – the approach of involving the public in the decision making process. Since public involvement is a demand today in nearly everything, the term enabling government/state is highly relevant in the aspiration to work cooperatively, not only in the context of a welfare state but also on other topics. For instance, McGrath and her associates applied the term enabling state in the context of sustainability in Western Australia (McGrath et al. 2004). According to them, in order to reach an optimal level of sustainability, it is imperative that the government acts according to a cooperative approach. It is imperative that cooperation be created between local and regional communities and the government and local industries in order for sustainability to be successful. What this means is that despite the fact that the enabling government’s approach especially focuses on executing policy by other elements aside from the state, some researchers wish to expand the approach also to public cooperation in the policy planning stage.

Latham (2001) claim that the guiding principles of an enabling state are:

- Searching for community-led solutions, while delegating authority to the community and building social capital and social competence.
- Learning from social organizations that work using social networks and implementing social work and workplace initiative skills on weaker communities.
- Allowing the poor to help themselves using creativity and achievement.
- Flattening the hierarchy and transforming the public government to a semi-autonomous network of service providers.
- Strengthening cooperation and trust between the government and communities.
- Demand that all sides be responsible.





In other words, Latham too refers to governmental bodies working together with the community and social organizations, while privatizing social services, in order to help the community help itself. We can also see how he believes that responsibility comes along with delegating responsibility. Moreover, he refers to the need to create cooperation and trust between both sides, whose main goal should be a common one.

Dingeldey claims that the enabling state is not a “minimalistic” state. This is because in order to change the unequal social structure, the state must provide a framework of infrastructure and services that will allow active participation as well as affording all citizens self-responsibility. Furthermore, cooperation between state institutions and the public necessitates coordination between the public institutions as well as regulation (Dingeldey 2004:6).

2. Adaptive Government:

The era we live in is fraught with crises, some internal and some based on external factors, which states must deal with. Crises based on external factors, such as a global financial crisis, immigration trends, changing political trends in neighboring countries and natural disasters, alongside internal crises, such as new social problems, strikes, social protests or security issues. These are but several examples of problems and crises that governments must deal with. We are talking about an era that is characterized by globalization trends, delegation of responsibility from the central government to lower government levels, adoption of new technology and communication methods, vulnerability to global terrorism and the violability of a nation-state’s borders. Governments must then be highly adaptive so that they may propose appropriate policies that fit the ever-changing circumstances as well as national crises that demand quick solutions. This does not refer to implementing a one-time reform, rather it refers to continuous adaptivity to a frequently changing society. Adaptivity is the ability of the public sector to act towards changing the strategic policy and its ability to bring about a quick restoration of the society and/or the economy. Finding an effective solution to a problem requires an adequate definition of the nature of the problem and also requires consistent, multi-faceted and





long-term intervention. Another challenge is that governments must find solutions to crises without increasing their expenditure (OECD 2005).

In such a complex, changing environment it is important that the public sector have the ability to adapt and deal with the challenges as they arise. But adaptivity is not merely a stand-alone objective, the public sector must adapt in order to keep on functioning efficiently. The roles it must fill and the circumstances in which it must act change over time. One of the steps governments take to increase the ability of the public sector to adapt to changing circumstances is by creating more flexibility in the human, organizational, procedural and service aspects. This is due to the fact that creating an adaptive change entails changing many people's attitude, demands creating knowledge that doesn't necessarily exist and using existing knowledge not commonly used (for instance, using scientific knowledge when making political decisions), and demands the involvement of leaders of different sectors, working cooperatively. Creating this kind of flexibility entails different hiring methods in the public sector, organizational changes, delegation of authority, reducing financial and regulatory hopes with the goal of affording managers and organizations more flexibility, and changing the way in which services to citizens are supplied, while increasing competition and inserting additional factors into the service providers' database (OECD 2005, Kettle 2000:495).

While it is not possible to stand around doing nothing, one must also know when to avoid or scale down changes that erode the public's trust in government institutions and the values which they promote. Obviously, the government cannot do everything on its own. It must recruit actors from the civil society and from the business sector and cooperate with them, in order to bring about a full and efficient restoration of the status quo. Even when the government implements policy that is meant to deal with a crisis, it must continue to uphold basic values such as justice, transparency, accountability, law obedience and more. A further aspect in the implementation is that it is hard to implement a change or reform from one location to another, or under





different circumstances in the same location, and unique solutions must be applied to each case (OECD 2005).

The term “adaptive government” or “adaptive governance” is frequently used in literature that deals with ecological problems and conflicts surrounding natural resources, and the need to find policy solutions (for example Brunner et al. 2005, Scholz and Stiftel 2005). Brunner and Steelman claim that the need to solve ecological crises and conflicts and a lack of natural resources (water, in their example), led to the development of the adaptive government. An adaptive government combines scientific knowledge and other knowledge types in order to locate and promote a common interest for all sides. This is done using open decision making structures, in other words, involving “regular” people in the decision-making process, alongside policy-makers on various levels. The authors argue that this form of government has been very successful in certain cases and can therefore be recommended as a practice for finding common ground in the 21st century (Brunner and Steelman 2005:2). Promoting common interests, Brunner and Steelman claim, is an important goal in democracy. The common interest is essentially made up of the interests that as many community members as possible share. The difficulty lies in finding what the interest that most people have in common is. When there are many, contradictory interests, the political challenge is finding a solution so that the community can keep working towards common goals (Ibid: 9-10). An adaptive government changes according to circumstances, and its goal is to adapt activity to the specific circumstances. An adaptive government is therefore an expression of pragmatism and not of utopian thinking (Ibid: 20).

Scholz and Stiftel (2005) define an adaptive government as a new generation of government institutions whose goal is to suggest solutions to collective action problems which arise as a result of different types of resource usage. From their perspective, an adaptive government is the development of new government institutions that are able to create sustainable, long-term policy solutions for





complicated problems. They do this while coordination with many factors which vary in knowledge, interests and power. They work with resource users and authorities and should find solutions that will satisfy everyone. In their book, Scholz and Stiftel refer to problems regarding the use of water resources in the state of Florida, but wish to infer sweeping conclusions from this example regarding adaptive governments and their handling of the resource struggle, as well as other issues.

According to the authors, successful handling of the natural resource issue depends on the ability to creative adaptive government institution. This ability is dependent on how certain challenges related to the adaptive government are handled:

- Representation – who needs to be involved?
- Decision-making process – how can the authorities and other involved parties together reach an agreed-upon policy that will best serve all sides?
- Scientific learning – how do policy makers efficiently develop and put knowledge to good use?
- Public learning – how can the different sides reach a common denominator that will serve as a base for an agreed-upon policy?
- Problem addressing – how well will the decisions succeed at accomplishing their goal of managing natural resources in a sustainable, fair and efficient way? (Scholz and Stiftel 2005: 5-6)

It is significant that the literature that deals with adaptive government in the context of the ecology and solving problems that arise out of use of natural resources, refer, in fact, to the same aspects of the more generalized literature on the topic. The central issue that rises is the need for the government to succeed at being able to quickly and efficiently provide solutions, while using new knowledge and cooperating with many bodies outside of the government.

There are many examples in Israel of new problems that necessitate creative, quick and efficient solutions. The social struggle (the “Tent Protest”), repetitive missile attacks on the south of Israel and the lack of protection there, the need to evict and restore the residents of the Gaza Strip following the Disengagement, the difficulties in





absorbing immigrants from Ethiopia, illegal immigrants and asylum-seekers infiltrating Israel's borders through the border with Egypt, the issue of the children of work-immigrants – these are all examples of new social problems that the government must deal with and provide quick, creative and adaptive solutions.

3. Open Government

On the most basic level, an open government is the idea that people have the right to gain access to government documents and procedures. The idea that the public has the right to examine the government and participate in it is an old idea, which originated in the Enlightenment period during the 18th century, and is enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States of America. The principles of the open government currently define all the democratic countries in the world.

Even though this is an old concept, the actual and practical significance keeps evolving. The term open government has been deeply affected by the open source software theory. What this means is that the idea of an open government is more focused today on providing opportunities to partake in government activity. Just as the program allows its users to change and contribute to the source code, so an open government means a government where not only citizens have access to information, documents and political processes taking place within the government, but they can also play a significant role participating in the government (Lathrop and Ruma 2010:xxi)

More significant participation by citizens during the democratic process necessitates knowledgeable participants. Confidentiality decreases the amount of information available to the public, and therefore also its ability to participate (Stiglitz 2002:30). An open government is there based on the principle of transparency. Usually transparency can be seen as encouraging more responsibility on the government's side. More transparency also means improving service to the public, which means giving citizens more power when dealing with the government, as well as a form of regulation on government activities. Transparency also reduces government





corruption, bribes and other offenses (Schauer 2011:1346-1350). An open government also means better communications between all branches and levels of government. When there is more internal cooperation, this leads to greater efficiency and responsibility (Lathrop and Ruma 2010:xxi).

The motion that allows the way an open government is perceived and behaves today is called **Government 2.0**, or Gov 2.0. This name is borrowed from the term web 2.0. Web 2.0 is the current phase the internet lies in, a stage of social media, where what defines the different tools it is composed of is the greater level of interaction by people within a group. People do not visit only one site and consume its content passively, rather they discuss and debate with each other and create their own content.⁴ Many democracies today are adopting the idea of government 2.0, recognizing that this leads to direct, honest and unprecedented dialogue between the government and the citizens. Supporters of implementing government 2.0 wish to redefine the relationship between the citizens and those in control of the government. What this means is that citizens will be more involved as full partners and not just as observers of government actions. The drive to greater openness and transparency in relations between the government and citizens will increase and force states that place great importance on democratic values to use the new technological tools to meet the increasing demand from the citizens. Supporters of using this new technology claim that these new technologies will improve the dialogue between the citizen and the government, will increase the citizens' level of participation in the political process, and will guarantee greater governmental transparency. The government 2.0 movement also wishes to lead another revolution, beyond changing the nature of the relationship between the citizens and the government. It wishes to change the relationship within the government, empowering government employees and making them break through political and organizational boundaries, adopting a managerial and decision making

⁴ From Shuki Galili's article "Government 2.0" on the website *Shalom Government! Reform in public government service* http://www.msh.gov.il/?page_id=102



structure that works from the bottom-up and not the other way around (Lathrop and Ruma 2010: xxii).

Israel is among the advanced countries whose governments try to make use of social media in government work in order to improve service given to the public, to increase cooperation between the citizen and government offices, and of course, to improve the internal work done in the offices. It is located after countries such as the USA, Canada, Great Britain and Japan, who lead this global trend, alongside Australia and New Zealand and before many European countries.⁵

An open government is only possible in democratic countries, which have less fear of public involvement in government doings and aren't threatened by the strengthening of the opposition following the opening of informational channels. The principle is that in a democratic regime, the power is in the citizens' hand, and therefore all citizens should be knowledgeable regarding the government's actions, so they can criticize it. The concept is that the decisions reached will be better, not only because of the public's ability to contribute in the decision-making process, but mainly because the decision makers know they are working under public scrutiny (Curtin and Meijers 1995, Coglianesi 2009).

Although many democratic countries today adopt the concept of an open government and the "government 2.0" format, there is a relevant debate over how open and transparent the government should be, and what kind of transparency should be promoted. This debate is also being held in the USA, during the Obama Administration. From his first day on the job, Obama pledged to maintain a high level of open government, such as never had been seen before. In his first year as President, Obama took many steps to increase the governmental transparency (Coglianesi 2009). However, too much transparency or transparency in the wrong places could actually harm the decision makers' ability to reach good decisions. People may avoid expressing doubt or self-criticism, since they know that their words, which will be

⁵From Yaron Gamburg's comments at a Gov 2.0 convention held in March, 2011. See the following link: <http://gilagideon.co.il/?p=1521>





revealed to the public, may later be used against them. They may avoid asking stupid questions, but ones that are necessary when decisions are being made. Full transparency can also make it hard for the government to receive essential information from corporate bodies, since these may fear the information will become public knowledge, especially to their competitors. The obvious question, then, is how much transparency is needed, and which kind of information should be revealed. Even the American Freedom of Information Act places limitations on documents that discuss national security, invasion of privacy or trade secrets. Another question is why type of transparency should be promoted. The most common type being discussed is known as “Fishbowl Transparency”. The goal of this type of transparency is to increase the exposure of information that presents the way in which government figures behave (who they meet, for example). There is another type of transparency, “Reasoned Transparency”, and this demands that government figures provide detailed explanations about their actions and the way they made certain decisions and rejected others (Ibid: 13-15).

In Israel, the first type of transparency is expressed for example by the Freedom of Information Act of 1998. This law allows any citizen or Israeli resident to send a request for information to any public authority regarding their activities. The authority is then obligated to provide the information in written, recorded, filmed, pictured or computerized format, as is required. The American law limits information in cases of possible concern for national security, privacy invasion or commercial secrets. The Israeli law takes it one step further and limits the information even when it is information that, if revealed, could potentially disrupt the normal operations of the public authority or its ability to perform its job properly, when dealing with policies which are in design stage or when referring to information regarding internal debates and consultations between public authority employees. The second type of transparency, *reasoned transparency*, was expressed in Israel following the Galant Affair, for example. The demands from those that supported this type of transparency was that when appointing high political figures (the IDF Chief of Staff, in this case) the professional and ethical criteria should be published, an in-depth, documented and





peer-reviewed investigation should be held, followed by the publishing of a reasoned decision.⁶

4. Responsive Government

A responsive government is a government that reacts and responds to the public mood. The relationship between the public opinion and the public policy lies at the heart of democracy. Because of this, the government's responsiveness to the majority's preferences is basic in the democratic approach (Binzer, Hobolt and Klemmensen 2005: 379).

The information age changed the face of society. Citizens today have much higher expectations from their governments than before. They also want to take a more active part in the governing work, which means, more than just the limited opportunities of dropping a vote in a ballot box every few years (Bourgon 2007: 12). This creates a basic change in the culture of governance, out of the assumption that there is great importance to creating quality relations between the government and the public. This is expressed in two aspects: The first is the need to be attentive to the public's sentiments and demands and to involve many more elements in the policy-deciding process. The second is the need to providing the public with services that are better, more accessible, quicker and more understandable. More advanced governments understand today the importance of using technology to provide these services, what is commonly known as e-Government, a government that provides online access to many of its services. This attitude of providing services from the perspective of the citizen in the center does not diminish itself to perceiving the citizen as a consumer or as someone using government services, rather is holds a broader perspective, one that recognizes the rights of the citizen and his interests (Ibid: 13). In Israel, for instance, there are barely any services that are open to the public that are not available online. Changing details on your Identification Card, tax

⁶Sagi, G (2011). Orderly Administration Equals Orderly Appointment, *The Marker*, 23.3.11. See the following link: <http://www.themarker.com/news/1.607066>



returns, filing a claim with social security and registering a child for day care may all be done over the internet.

There is a tight bond between the open government and the responsive government. An open government must also be responsive, or, in other words, must be able to respond to new ideas, demands and needs that arise from the public. Openness does not only mean transparency, but also responsivity and accessibility, in order to create a better, higher-quality relationship between the government and the public which it serves. Responsivity means giving the public, the corporate sector and the civil society organizations the option of participating in the decision-making process. The government must listen to the public and take its suggestions into account while formulating and implementing public policy and public services (OECD 2005: 29-30).

A responsive government is a government that consults much more with the public on matters of legislation and during the policy-making process, in order to improve the public policy as well as the governmental legitimacy. Governments that wish to be more responsive must improve the tools for consultations with the public (Ibid: 41). Governments today understand more and more that they cannot efficiently execute and implement policy, good as it may be, if the citizens don't understand or support that policy. Therefore, governments are looking for new ways to involve a wider range of actors in the policy-making stage. Consultations with the public between election cycles is not meant to replace the traditional representative democracy or the central place of the chosen government and parliament in the policy-making process, rather it is there to compliment it. There are countries (such as Canada, Iceland, The Netherlands and Norway) where consultations with the public is an established practice, while other countries have only recently started recognizing this practice is a main component in modern policy-making. The goal is to listen to public sentiment and take into account the opinion of the public, as well as that of interest groups, during the policy-making process, in order to make the policy a better one. In order for it to be efficient, the consultation needs clear laws and objectives that will define,





for instance, how much the government is obligated to respond to complaints raised by the public. There is a wide range of ways to consult with the public. Referendums, as are common in Switzerland, are an example of an established and binding consultation. There are other ways which are less binding, such as consulting with certain interest groups (Ibid: 42).

In Israel, moves to consult and cooperate with the public have been gathering steam in recent years. The subject received much attention with Israel's being accepted as a member of the OECD and turning the "round tables" into stated government policy. Consultations and cooperation with the public have existed in Israel on the local level, but also on the central government's policy-making level. In February 2008 the government approved a set policy with everything relating to government relations, civil society organizations and corporate organizations that work towards promoting public objectives. The decision was established in the "Governmental Planning Guide"⁷ and in the government's decisions⁸. The government's decision and the policy paper were formulated in the Policy Planning Wing of the Prime Minister's Office in a process that began in 2006 and included many meetings with different elements of Israeli society.

The government's decision determined that there must be a "continuous dialogue" with organizations from the both the third and the corporate sectors through the framework of "round tables". The round table has convened a large number of times since 2008 and has been a stage for consultations on many different issues. In 2009, for example, a round table was opened as a part of "Operation Cast Lead" in Gaza. The opening of the table was led by the National Emergency Management Authority as a part of the conclusions following the Second Lebanon War. The round table was founded with consultation, information sharing and coordination of activities in mind. Throughout the round table's operation, governmental and organizational policy in

⁷ Link to the guide can be found here: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/9A016B17-E89B-4367-B101-6A54C09F4A52/0/madrich1.pdf>

⁸ Link to government decision #4085, approved September 14, 2008, can be found here: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/AFE5DCDC-C136-4D03-A097-2D4B5D128A37/0/madad.pdf>



several fields was designed, and a wide level of coordination was reached, which prevented chaos when it came to taking care of citizens. Since then, the National Emergency Management Authority has integrated the “round table” into its operational approach. This “common planning” approach also means coordinating interest groups in the design processes that affect them. In light of this approach, the Prime Minister’s Office designed work procedures with representatives from various sectors (such as the Arab sector, the Ethiopian community and Holocaust survivors), after which governmental policy was changed and decisions were reached that received wide public approval.⁹

In the United States there is extremely positive attention given to the issue of cooperating with and consulting with the public. President Barack Obama has been promoting, as we said before, the principles of open government. In his words: “Knowledge is widely dispersed in society, and public officials benefit from having access to that dispersed knowledge...their collective expertise and information.” The memorandum that Obama signed at the beginning of his administration led to a series of moves not only with regards to transparency, but also with regards to cooperating and consulting with the public. For instance, 100,000 people participated in preparing “the Citizen Briefing Book” for the President, a national brainstorm was held on open government, and dozens of projects were launched by Federal offices that were closely followed by the public. Cooperative procedures are being run in the United States also on lower levels of government, on both the state and municipal level.¹⁰

Social media has great potential to increase the scope, width and depth of government consultations with citizens and interested parties during the policy-making stage. New tools for online consultation include government portals, internet websites, email distribution lists and online discussion forums. It is not clear yet whether these new

⁹ Information taken from the “Insights” website, at the following link: <http://www.insights-israel.com/149856/israel> and from the Prime Minister’s Office’s website, at the following link: <http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMO/PM+Office/Departments/policyplanning/migzar1.htm>

¹⁰ Information taken from the “Insights” website, at the following link: <http://www.insights-israel.com/149856/unitedstates>





tools can replace the traditional tools in the foreseeable future. At the same time, they can be highly effective when they are combined with “regular” forms of consultation, which include face-to-face meetings (Ibid: 43).

As we said before, responsivity is not merely the purview of the central government, but also that of the local government. As a matter of fact, the understanding is increasingly developing that it is much easier, and perhaps more right, to cooperate and consult with citizens during the decision-making process on the local level as opposed to the national level (See Needham 2002 for the British context and Brackertz et al. 2005 for the Australian context). In Great Britain, for example, it was a part of a total reform in local government led by a Labour government when it took power in 1997. The government hoped to expand the scope of consultations with the public, as a way of improving services for the public, increasing the local democracy and empowering communities. This was presented as a heal for all the ills of local democracy, as a way of building trust between citizens and their elected representatives, and as a way to ensure that the authorities would bear responsibility and be responsive towards the communities which they served (Needham 2002: 699).

According to Needham, several significant obstacles must be overcome if consultation with the public is to become a real foundation to building a relationship between the authorities and the residents, as well as creating community involvement in the process of making decisions that affect their lives. The first obstacle is funding. This is an expensive procedure that must have adequate funding. The second obstacle is demands. It is hard to hold efficient consultation when the public does not wish to participate. If the participating experience is a friendly one and people feel their demands and needs are being responded to, they will want to continue participating in the future. The third obstacle is transparency. The authorities must publish information regarding the process, its findings and the authority’s response. The objective is for the people to understand how the cooperation is being done and how effective it is (Ibid: 712-713).





The OECD countries have been using the aid of interested parties in decision-making for decades. Approximately 30 countries regularly hold consultation proceedings or run consultation websites before confirming laws and statutes. This is done both on the central and local government levels. At the same time, the cumulative experience in OECD countries points to an effectiveness issue. Data shows that 48% of governments see these procedures as “something that could delay decision-reaching”, while 30% negatively drew attention to the “managerial overload” involved in these procedures. These findings add yet another obstacle to the three that Needham listed – the delay created by cooperating and consulting with the public. When the decision-makers do not see a contribution from the procedure, it becomes a mere formality that has no effect, until even the participants lose interest.¹¹

In their article, Young and Callahan (2007) study possible explanations for why managers in the public sector choose to involve citizens in the decision-making process. The explanations are: (1) responding to prominent external actors – how much the decision to involve the public is as a response to the demands of external actors such as politicians, involved citizens, governmental agencies and various organizations, which all encourage participation. (2) the effect of normative values related to participation – how much the decision to involve and cooperate with the public in the decision-making process derives from the authorities’ desire to reach decisions that will be beneficial for the community, will solve community problems and will provide a response to the public interests. (3) administrative practicability – how significant are the limitations and problems involved in cooperating with the public, both on the side of the public and on the side of the authorities, who must decide whether to involve the public or not.

Research findings show that among the three explanations for involving the public, the strongest explanation is the second one, namely, the bureaucratic system’s response to the positive aspects of cooperation. Managers in the public sector are the

¹¹ Information taken from the “Insights” website, at the following link: <http://www.insights-israel.com/149856/oeed>





one that determine who will participate, in what method, how public inputs will be integrated in the decision-making process and what expression they will have in the decisions that are reached. The values and preferences of such managers are therefore highly influential and may enable or limit significant citizen involvement. Findings also show that elected officials also have a large amount of influence encouraging involvement and cooperation with the public. Researchers claim that in order to improve public involvement, citizens should contact elected officials and ask them to promote the issue. It was also found that non-profit organizations also have the ability to bring influence to bear on the issue. Moreover, it was also found that time limitations are the main technical obstacle limiting public involvement (Yang and Callahan 2007).





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