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Descriptive Analysis of Open Government Practices of Four Mid-Sized Cities in New York State

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of Public Policy and Administration
West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of
Doctor of Public Administration

By

Brian C. Bray

December 2023

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Dedication

To my wife, Cathryn, whose unwavering support and understanding have been the foundation of my success. Your patience and love have illuminated my path, making every step of this academic endeavor not just achievable but also deeply meaningful.

To my daughters, Beatrix and Matilda, whose sharp wit and dry humor have brought laughter and levity to even the most challenging days of this undertaking. Your intelligence and probing questions have not only kept me sharp but have also served as a constant reminder of the joy and intricacies of learning. Your brilliance and spirited nature inspire me every day, and I am filled with pride to witness such strength and intellect in both of you.

To my mother, whose doors and heart were always welcoming, providing me with a sanctuary each weekend where thoughts could unfurl, and words could find their voice. Your selfless love and unwavering encouragement have been the cornerstones of my resilience and determination.

And, most of all, to Chester, the most extraordinary boy one could ever imagine. Your presence has been a source of solace and happiness, a reminder of the simple yet profound joys that life offers beyond the realm of academic pursuits.

This dissertation is not merely a reflection of my efforts, but a tribute to each of you, who have been my driving force, my inspiration, and my greatest blessings. Thank you for being the guiding stars that illuminated my path throughout this incredible journey.

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Dissertation Committee

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Abstract

The conceptualization and implementation of open government practices have evolved over the years, encompassing numerous actions that increase transparency, participation, and collaboration. While states mandate some open government practices for municipal governments, they also often implement optional forms independently. This paper examines how four mid-sized cities implement two such optional forms: government boards and open government data.

This study was conducted in three stages. In the first stage, the author used the Democracy Cube framework, a theoretical model developed by Fung (2006), that categorizes various approaches to public participation in government decision-making along three dimensions. This model served as the foundation for conducting an ideal-type analysis of city-established government boards. In the second stage, the author developed a hierarchical taxonomy to classify open government data that the cities published. The content of each dataset, irrespective of public sector domains, served as the basis of the taxonomy. In the final stage, the researcher performed a multi-case embedded case study analysis where the city served as the primary unit of analysis and the public sector domain was the embedded unit of analysis. How the four city governments use both government boards and open government data was examined, as was the relationship between these two open government tools.

Overall, this study offers a detailed and nuanced analysis of open government practices, contributing significantly to the academic literature and practical understanding of these tools in local government contexts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Although the concept of open government has significant support among activists and public officials (Orszag, 2009; Open Government Partnership, 2023), consensus on its meaning has been elusive (Tai, 2021). Open government was initially associated with transparency and the availability of governmental information to the public (Meijer et al., 2012). However, following the Open Government Directive issued by the Obama administration, the concept was expanded to include participation and collaboration (Orszag, 2009). The Directive continues to dominate the conceptualization of open government nearly fifteen years later (Tai, 2021). Despite the widespread belief in the importance of open government for democratic governance, relatively few studies have explored how this concept is operationalized in local governments, especially since the Obama administration issued the Open Government Directive and popularized the publishing of open government data. In this paper, I hope to fill that research gap by examining the open government practices of four mid-sized cities in New York State. Specifically, this paper concentrates on two tools of open government widely used in local governments: open government data, primarily linked with transparency, and volunteer government boards, associated with public participation.

I aim to offer a nuanced and detailed account of how these cities implement and operationalize these open government tools within local contexts. Gaining insights into how these tools function in real-world settings is pivotal for developing a more robust conceptualization of the open government philosophy and its practical applications. This paper aims to contribute to scholarly literature and policy discussions by providing empirical evidence and analytical insights into the implementation of open government tools in local governments.

In this paper, my goal is to thoroughly and accurately describe how four cities have implemented open government tools and contextualize these tools within the broader pillars of democratic governance to which public administrators are accountable. I do not declare that one city

has done a better job than another in implementing these tools. Instead, I acknowledge the inherent variability in the implementation of open government practices, recognizing that cities should tailor their approaches to suit their unique local contexts. By adopting a neutral perspective, I aim to limit bias and present a comprehensive and objective analysis of the subject matter. This perspective rejects the notion that open government is an unalloyed good. Instead, it is an acknowledgment that public administrators must balance the benefits of implementing open government tools against other democratic principles and practical considerations. Public administrators are instrumental in shaping the use of open government tools, and this paper examines how these tools are being used to impact democratic governance.

This introductory chapter lays the foundation for the paper, outlining its background, problem statement, research questions, definition of key terms, purpose, significance, and methodology. Subsequent chapters delve into the literature review, empirical findings, and conclusions derived from the research.

Background of the Study

This paper examines four mid-sized cities in New York State, focusing on those cities' implementation of open government tools within their local government structures. The four cities examined in this paper are Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany. All four cities examined in this paper have a strong mayor-council form of government, characterized by a mayor with substantial powers, including appointing and removing agency heads, preparing the budget, and exercising broad veto powers over council actions. Cities in New York State enjoy substantial home rule powers, including the authority to change their charters and codes by local action (Hochul & Rodriguez, 2023). I selected these four cities due to convenience and the potential replicability of the results. Since the cities were all in the same state, with comparable populations and similar structures, I expected to find that the cities used the same or similar open government tools.

The cities in this study have to comply with traditional, first-generation open government requirements. New York State requires that meetings of all public bodies, including cities, be open to the public. In addition, the state grants the public broad authority to inspect and copy local government records. Additionally, New York State requires municipalities to have specific boards, such as a zoning board of appeals, that are provided with unique powers (Hochul & Rodriguez, 2023). However, cities can also create other types of boards using their home rule authority.

The statutory requirements of New York State, including mandated public meetings and broad public access to local government records, serve as a foundational layer upon which the cities in this study build their open government initiatives. These legislative mandates, in combination with the latitude offered through home rule powers, present an intricate landscape for understanding how cities operationalize the tenets of open government. Cities can tailor their use of open government tools to meet their local context's specific needs, challenges, and opportunities.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

While open government has evolved conceptually to include the dimensions of transparency, participation, and collaboration, a comprehensive understanding of its implementation in local governments still needs to be explored. Although New York State mandates specific open government requirements, such as public meetings and access to government records, how individual cities operationalize other open government tools within their unique contexts is not understood. This limited comprehension hinders the development of a nuanced conceptualization of open government that can be universally applied or adapted.

Existing open government research has two shortcomings. First, existing research has primarily examined a single open government tool in an individual study. While that research may provide insight into that tool, it fails to examine the topic holistically. If open government is a unified concept with multiple tools, the investigation of a single tool does not fully examine open government. Considering

open government tools in combination may result in critical findings. Second, studies have treated governments and governmental actions as a monolith. Cities perform an array of services in numerous public sector domains, such as policing and planning. It should not be assumed that cities operationalize openness the same way when using multiple policy instruments in various public sector domains. To solve the shortcomings of the current state of open government research, the two overarching research questions I examine in this paper are:

- (1) How do city governments use government boards and open government data?; and
- (2) How are various open government tools related to one another?

However, I encountered a different problem when answering the above research questions. A methodology that allowed for comparing government boards and open government datasets across multiple public sector domains did not exist. A methodology is necessary to comprehend and explain how these cities use these open government tools. In particular, I needed a methodology to organize my thoughts and communicate my findings. To develop that language, two additional research questions answered in this paper are:

- (3) What are the distinct types of local government boards based on their membership composition, powers and duties, decision-making processes, and place in the policy process?; and
- (4) What are the distinct types of open government datasets based on what each line in the dataset represents?

Definition of Key Terms

For the purposes of this study, the following terms will be used as they are defined below:

Open Government Data: Data that the government has made publicly available in a format that is usable and accessible to citizens, businesses, and organizations. It involves the release of government-held datasets and information in a machine-readable and non-proprietary format,

allowing individuals and entities to access, use, analyze, and share the data freely for any purpose (Open Knowledge Foundation, n.d.).

Open Government Dimensions: Aspects of governance that promote transparency, participation, and collaboration between government institutions and the public. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive and often intersect to create a more open and accountable government system.

Open Government Tools: A collection of methodologies, platforms, and practices that governments use to enhance democratic governance. These tools are specifically designed to incorporate one or more of the following core elements: transparency, public participation, or accountability. Their use is aimed at ensuring that governmental processes and decisions are more open and accessible to the public, fostering an environment where citizen involvement and oversight are integral parts of the governance model.

Policy Instruments: The tools or mechanisms governments use to carry out their policy objectives, encompassing the four main resources at their disposal: nodality (ability to act as a central hub or information broker), authority (power to command or enforce compliance), treasure (use of financial resources to incentivize or subsidize desired behaviors), and organization (capacity to structure and manage its operations) (Hood, 1983, as cited in Bertelli, 2012).

Policy Process: The sequential stages a policy undergoes, from its initial conception and creation, through implementation, to adjudication.

Public Sector Domain: A specific area or segment within the governmental framework characterized by a distinct set of interrelated services provided to the public. This domain encompasses the tangible services rendered and the intricate network of employees, officials, and infrastructure responsible for its execution.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to advance both academic understanding of open government and practical applications of open government tools. This research aims to fill existing gaps in the literature by examining the operationalization of multiple open government tools within specific local contexts. The paper aspires to contribute to a real-world and nuanced conceptualization of open government.

In addition, the paper's development of a new methodology for categorizing government boards and open government datasets in a manner independent of public sector domains can be a foundational resource for future research. This methodology can serve as valuable scaffolding for other scholars to draw upon, enabling more comprehensive and rigorous analyses of these open government tools and their implementations.

Theoretical Framework

The Varieties in Participation/Democracy Cube is a theoretical framework that categorizes various approaches to public participation in government decision-making. The cube has three dimensions: participant selection; communication and decision modes; and the authority and power of the endeavor. Different forms of public participatory practices can be plotted within the cube using these dimensions. By categorizing various participatory tools in this three-dimensional space, the cube allows for a comprehensive comparison and understanding (Fung, 2006).

Methodological Overview

I used ideal-type analysis to create categories for governmental boards, a qualitative research method that involves constructing typologies from qualitative data. Ideal type analysis is based on the work of Max Weber, who developed the concept of the ideal type as a way to understand complex social phenomena. Ideal type analysis was a methodology developed to add methodological rigor to the

development of ideal types by systematically identifying and comparing different types of social phenomena (Stapley et al., 2021).

I created a hierarchical taxonomy to categorize sets of open government data. According to Baily (1994), a hierarchical taxonomy is a system of classification in which items are organized into a hierarchy of nested categories. The categories are arranged in a tree-like structure, with the most general categories at the top and the most specific categories at the bottom. Each category is a subset of the category above it, and each entity belongs to only one category at each level of the hierarchy.

I used a multi-case, embedded case study to examine how city governments use government boards and open government data and the relationship between open government tools. The multi-case, embedded case study is a research method that comprises multiple cases, wherein each case consists of multiple units of analysis, commonly referred to as subcases (Yin, 2018). In this research design, each city government represented a case, and the specific units of analysis within each case (i.e., subcase) included the component public sector domains. In addition, I used the pattern-matching analytical technique when conducting my analysis. The pattern-matching analytical technique is a method used to compare an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (to assess the internal validity of a case study (Yin, 2018).

Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into four substantive chapters, as detailed below:

- Chapter 2: Literature Review. This chapter provides a survey of existing literature on the theoretical foundation of open government philosophy. Next, the chapter provides an overview of traditional open government tools used by local governments in New York State. The paper then examines open government at the local level. Finally, it discusses the democracy cube theoretical framework.

- Chapter 3: Ideal Type Analysis of Voluntary Boards. In this chapter, an ideal type analysis is conducted on all the voluntary boards in the selected four cities. My objective was to categorize these boards based on their membership composition, powers and duties, decision-making processes, and position in the policy process.
- Chapter 4: Public Participation through Government Boards: A Critical Analysis. This chapter critically examines voluntary government board membership as a form of public participation, exploring three perspectives: state-centric, participant-centric, and societal-centric. It evaluates how these viewpoints shape the understanding of board membership's role in public engagement and decision-making processes.
- Chapter 5: Hierarchical Taxonomy of Open Government Datasets. This chapter delves into the creation of a hierarchical taxonomy for open government datasets made available by the four selected cities. The taxonomy is based on what each line in the dataset represents.
- Chapter 6: Descriptive Analysis of Open Government Practices. Using a multi-case, embedded case study methodology, this chapter offers an in-depth examination of the four selected cities and their component public sector domains. It scrutinizes their utilization of open government tools, aiming to draw insights that are both specific to each case and generalizable.
- Chapter 7: Recommendations for Public Administrators. This chapter synthesizes the findings from the previous chapters into actionable strategies for public administrators. It provides a framework for public administrators to analyze existing open government tools and design new ones.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The concept of *open government* received a significant boost in attention within the academic community after President Barack Obama signed the Transparency and Open Government memorandum on his first day as President. In this memorandum, Obama stated that the federal government should be transparent, participatory, and collaborative. The memorandum describes open government as “...a system of transparency, public participation, and collaboration.... (that) will strengthen our democracy and promote efficiency and effectiveness in Government” (January 21, 2009). The memorandum directed the Chief Technology Officer, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, and the Administrator of General Services to collaborate on an Open Government Directive.

The political context in which Obama was elected President in 2008 shaped his commitment to open government. To the dismay of good government groups, the Attorney General in the previous administration encouraged extreme caution to federal agencies when releasing documents under the Freedom of Information Act following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack. Additionally, the public perception that the influence of special interest groups over federal policymaking had significantly increased during the previous administration, particularly evident in the Energy Policy Task Force's secret meetings with fossil fuel industry officials. As a result, professional organizations and advocacy groups started developing transparency and open government recommendations that they hoped the next administration would implement. Obama, a political candidate who positioned himself as a change agent, adopted these positions and made them a top priority for his administration (Coglianese, 2009).

Following the Transparency and Open Government memorandum, the Open Government Directive was issued at the end of Obama's first year and required each federal agency to develop its own Open Government Plan. Each Plan was required to include five components: transparency, participation, collaboration, a flagship initiative, and public and agency involvement. The transparency component of the Directive was the most prescriptive of the five, focusing on increasing the amount,

type, and granularity of information available on federal websites. The participation and collaboration components were vaguer, indicating a desire to increase public engagement along these two approaches but only requiring agencies to use e-government tools. Each agency was also required to develop one or more flagship initiatives that increased transparency, participation, or collaboration. Finally, each agency Plan had to use public and employee engagement during the creation of its Plan, as well as in any subsequent revisions (P. R. Orszag, executive memorandum, December 8, 2009).

The Directive required federal agencies to publish government data online. That requirement served as a catalyst for the U.S. General Services Administration to create a government-wide data portal, data.gov, that all federal agencies use to host the datasets they choose to publish. A report for the Congressional Reporting Service issued soon after the portal was created criticized how some federal agencies fulfilled this requirement. Their report noted that although some datasets that federal agencies published could enhance public knowledge, many had negligible potential to impact the transparency of their operations or policy execution. In addition, they questioned the assumption that the public can effectively use the published datasets, raising concerns about the capacity, resources, and knowledge required to accurately evaluate and interpret government data (Ginsberg, 2010).

In their 2011 study, Lukensmeyer, Goldman, and Stern analyzed public participation initiatives in federal agencies' open government plans. They identified three main categories of these initiatives: online, face-to-face, and formal participation. Online participation encompassed crowdsourcing and ideation, where the public could propose and vote on solutions to specific issues; contests to incentivize innovative solutions; and wikis, which were collaborative platforms for user-generated content. Face-to-face participation involved listening sessions and public hearings, providing platforms for agency leaders to receive input from the public, as well as from experts and stakeholders. The third category, formal participation, included advisory committees that offered agency leaders ongoing input from the public and stakeholders, as well as rule-making processes that involved the public in establishing regulations.

The Obama administration's actions mobilized scholars to try to develop a unified and integrated understanding of open government. The academic community has not reached a consensus on the open government concept, and the debate is still ongoing. Meijer et al. (2012) conceptualized open government as openness in informational and interactive terms. Informational openness, they argue, fosters transparency, enabling citizens to monitor government actions. Interactive openness, on the other hand, empowers citizens to engage in and participate in the government's decision-making processes. The two have a synergistic and complementary relationship, as one strengthens and reinforces the other. Open government is defined here as "the extent to which citizens can monitor and influence government processes through access to information and access to decision-making arenas" (Meijer et al., 2012, p. 13). This concept of open government deviated from the one provided by the Obama administration as it did not include collaboration and, instead, regarded it as a by-product of transparency. Additionally, this concept was more focused on public accountability and, unlike the Obama administration's conception, did not emphasize increasing efficiency and effectiveness in government.

Wirtz and Birkmeyer (2015) developed an open government framework that includes the pillars of transparency, participation, and collaboration; those pillars aim to enhance public and citizen value. These three pillars influence the government's relationship with citizens and businesses. Accountability, trust in government, regulations, and technology are external factors that influence open government, with accountability and trust in government also influencing open government. The authors developed a new definition of open government:

"A multilateral, political, and social process, which includes in particular transparent, collaborative, and participatory action by government and administration. To meet these conditions, citizens and social groups should be integrated into political processes with the support of modern information and communication technologies, which together should

improve the effectiveness and efficiency of governmental and administrative actions” (Wirtz & Birkmeyer, 2015, pp. 382-384).

Unlike the Obama (2009) and Meijer et al. (2012) concepts, Wirtz and Birkmeyer (2015) do not present public accountability as a direct objective of open government; instead, they present public accountability as an external factor that influences and is influenced by open government actions. They also presented trust in government in a similar manner. Additionally, this definition requires information and communication technologies, which was also a de facto requirement of the Obama administration’s Open Government Directive.

According to Grimmelikhuijsen and Feeney (2016), transparency, participation, and accessibility are the three dimensions of open government. They define transparency and participation using the classical definition of each and consider collaboration as a form of participation. Accessibility is concerned with the ability of all stakeholders to access information and participate. These authors argue that these three dimensions share the same structural, cultural, and environmental antecedents. Grimmelikhuijsen and Feeney define open government as “the extent to which external actors can monitor and influence government processes through access to government information and decision-making arenas” (p. 580). It should be noted that this definition is remarkably similar to the one provided by Meijer et al. (2012), with the only change being the phrase *external actors* in place of *citizens*. However, both still designate the purpose being to *monitor* and *influence* rather than promote efficiency and effectiveness in government, which was a key focus of the Obama administration’s Open Government Directive.

In an attempt to move the field beyond the descriptive analyses that comprise the bulk of the research on the topic, Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2015) developed an integrative framework of open government. From an e-government perspective, they define open government as:

“A technological and institutional strategy that transforms government information from a citizen’s perspective. Citizens can protect, reuse, collaborate, or interact with information and data in several forms. As a result of this transformation, citizens are empowered to scrutinize public officials’ decisions and actions to enhance transparency and accountability and, consequently, to propose different alternatives for public service and other government actions” (Sandoval-Almazan & Gil-Garcia, 2016, p. 171).

The authors argue that open government has four components: open data, collaboration, co-production, and legal framework. Open data, analogous to transparency in other open government descriptions, describes how governments use technology to organize and disseminate information. Collaboration pertains to concepts referred to as participation and collaboration in other open government descriptions. Co-production, not mentioned in any of the above descriptions of open government, is a form of collaboration where the government and the public jointly produce information. Legal framework refers to the laws and policies that institutionalize open government practices. In addition to these four concepts, however, the authors also present four open government conceptual pillars: wikinomics, transparency and accountability, the network and intelligent state, and institutionalism and sociotechnical theory. According to Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2015), these pillars, which have a dynamic relationship with the four concepts, provide a theoretical perspective around the more operational concepts.

Tai (2021) highlighted the prevailing scholarly concerns regarding the nebulous conceptualization of open government in a meta-analysis of open government research. Several underlying factors exacerbate this lack of conceptual clarity. First, there is no sound theoretical foundation for open government that would allow for systematic knowledge organization and an explanation of the causal relationships between various components. Second, since governments can implement open government in countless ways, creating a conceptualization that includes every way is

impossible. Thirdly, the multidimensional nature of open government, which encompasses multiple goals and dimensions, obfuscates its conceptual clarity. He concluded that open government is still conceptualized primarily in terms of the three fundamental components listed in the Open Government Directive.

The scholarly debate on the meaning of Open Government is still ongoing, with Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia (2016) noting that “...there is no consensus about open government’s functions and goals” (p. 171). Despite the ongoing debate, many governments are still progressing to implement open government practices. The Open Government Partnership was initiated on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in 2011 with six members representing national governments and has since received open government commitments from 75 nations and 104 subnational governments. The Open Government Partnership aims to make “more governments become sustainably more transparent, more accountable, and more responsive to their citizens, with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of governance, as well as the quality of services that citizens receive” (Open Government Partnership, 2023). The Open Government Partnership provides recommendations in ten cross-cutting topic areas for governments to follow: assets disclosure and conflicts of interest; budgets (fiscal transparency), citizen engagement, open government data, privacy and data protection, public contracting, public services, records management, right to information, and whistleblower protections (Transparency & Accountability Institute, 2013). This perspective, from an international organization, focuses more heavily on public accountability measures than social scientists who primarily analyze Western democracies with e-government capabilities.

Traditional Open Government in New York State Local Governments

Freedom of Information Law

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), enacted on July 4, 1966, by President Lyndon B. Johnson, grants citizens the right to access information held by federal government agencies, albeit with

certain limitations. The primary objective of FOIA is to facilitate open government and to promote transparency and accountability. By allowing the public to access governmental records, FOIA aims to ensure that the public remains informed and engaged to strengthen democratic processes. Following the Watergate scandal, Congress revised the FOIA in 1977 to tighten restrictions on the government's ability to withhold documents (Wald, 1984). New York State enacted its counterpart, the Freedom of Information Law, in 1974, extending the ability for citizens to access documents from state and municipal governments within the state. This statute stipulates that all records created or held by state or local government agencies should be publicly accessible unless there is a significant reason to keep them confidential. Exceptions to this rule include records that infringe on personal privacy, contain trade secrets, or house confidential data, as well as any records explicitly exempted by state or federal laws (Marino, 1974).

In New York State, each governmental agency must appoint a records access officer who coordinates the agency's response to requests from the public for government records. The records access officer has five business days to acknowledge that the agency has received the request to access government documents and 20 days to respond to the request. If the agency denies a request, an individual can appeal within 30 days. The agency has ten business days to respond to the appeal. In cases where the agency denies the appeal, individuals can pursue further legal action in a New York State court (Committee on Open Government, 2022).

Open Meetings Law

In the decades preceding the congressional enactment of the Freedom of Information Act, advocacy for transparent governance was already underway. The American Society of Newspaper Editors established the Freedom of Information Committee in the 1950s. They argued that the public had a right to know how their government was operating and that open meeting laws were essential to protecting this right ("Open Meeting Statutes: The Press Fights for the 'Right to Know,'" 1962). In 1976,

the federal government also enacted an open meetings law, the Government in the Sunshine Act. The Sunshine Act applies to all federal agencies, requiring them to hold open meetings and make public records available to the public (Baird, 1977). In 1977, New York State's open meetings law took effect, opening governmental meetings to public scrutiny.

Piotrowski and Borry (2010) articulated an eight-component framework to evaluate the effectiveness of open meeting laws in advancing transparency. Key elements include "Notice and Agenda," which necessitate advance meeting announcements and agenda publication, and "Minutes," which provide detailed accounts of discussions and decisions. Additionally, the framework discusses "Closed Meeting Sessions," which must have justifiable exclusions, and "Public Comment," which facilitates citizen participation. The framework also addresses modern elements such as "Electronic Meetings" conducted via various digital platforms and penalties categorized as "Violations, Sanctions, Fines, and Attorneys' Fees" for non-compliance. The "Physical Space" architecture is posited as the eighth element, emphasizing its role in subtly signaling inclusivity or exclusivity to the public.

New York State's Open Meetings Law aligns closely with this framework. The law mandates a 72-hour advance notice for meetings planned at least a week ahead, which must be publicly posted and sent to media outlets. For other, more immediate meetings, the board must give public notice as soon as feasible. The law insists on detailed minutes summarizing all formal proceedings and votes (Committee on Open Government, 2022).

Executive sessions, or closed meetings, are allowed only for certain topics like personnel issues or pending litigation, and actions taken during these sessions must be summarized in the minutes. The law also makes provisions to aid accessibility for individuals with physical disabilities. Although initially a pandemic response, provisions for virtual meetings exist but are set to expire in 2024. Legal recourse is available for enforcing the law's provisions, but notably, the law does not explicitly require a public comment segment in meetings (Committee on Open Government, 2022).

Open Government at the Local Level

Antecedents

Using 2014 survey data and observational data from the websites of 500 cities with a population between 25,000 and 250,000, Grimmelikhuijsen and Feeney (2016) investigated how structural, cultural, and environmental variables explain open government dimensions. Their open government dimensions were accessibility, transparency, and participation. The study suggested that more populous cities and cities with more technological capacity were more likely to implement open government processes. Aspects of cultural and environmental factors also influenced the adoption of open government dimensions; however, those factors may be limited to a single dimension, and the causal relationship was not as strong as size and technological capacity.

Schmidhuber and Hilgers (2021) explored the determinants of adopting various dimensions of open government at the municipal level, including organizational capacity and the willingness of managerial and political actors. The study supported the hypothesis that organizational capacity positively impacts the adoption of open government practices and that the perceptions of managerial and political actors also play a significant role. Furthermore, the study suggests that open government willingness partially mediates organizational capacity's effect on some dimensions of open government. Additionally, differences in the willingness to implement open government measures between managerial and political actors and its mediating effect on organizational capacity. Specifically, it found that politicians reported significantly higher levels of both organizational capacity and open government willingness compared to public managers. This suggests that managerial actors may be less willing or perceive lesser capacity for adopting open government practices compared to their political counterparts.

Open Government Data

Open government data is defined as government data that the government has made publicly available in a format that is usable and accessible to citizens, businesses, and organizations. It involves the release of government-held datasets and information in a machine-readable and non-proprietary format, allowing individuals and entities to access, use, analyze, and share the data freely for any purpose (Open Knowledge Foundation, n.d.; Attard et al., 2015; Quarati, 2021). Thus, open government data includes two dimensions: legal openness and technical openness. Advocates believe that open government data promotes transparency (Welle Donker et al., 2016; Kulk & van Loenen, 2012), unlocks social and commercial value, and fosters participatory governance (Attard et al., 2015; Castro & Korte, 2015). However, governments that provide open government data do not necessarily increase political transparency (Yu & Robinson, 2012; Matheus & Janssen, 2020). Four perspectives shed light on different aspects of open government data: bureaucratic, technological, political, and politico-economic. The bureaucratic perspective focuses on the internal management of government data, including quality, security, and privacy issues. The technological perspective emphasizes using technology to improve data collection, storage, and dissemination. The political perspective sees open government data as a tool for promoting transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in government. Finally, the politico-economic perspective views open government data as a way to signal political openness and democratic stability (Gonzalez-Zapata & Heeks, 2015).

Open government data was an essential component of the Open Government Directive, listed as the first step the Obama administration required for creating a more open government. The Directive mandated that federal agencies publish their data online promptly and in a machine-readable format that was available to the public without limitations that would stymie its re-use. Also, the Directive compelled the creation of the Data.gov website; Data.gov served as a data store that cataloged the various datasets created in response to the Directive. In addition to the Open Government Directive,

several other initiatives have promoted the use of open government data. For example, the Open Data Charter (ODC) was established in 2015 through a collaborative effort involving governments and civil society organizations worldwide. It aimed to refine and enhance open data principles for global adoption, emphasizing principles such as open data by default, interoperability, and citizen engagement (Castro & Korte, 2015).

Nikiforova and McBride (2021) developed a methodology to compare the usability of open government data portals. This methodology focused on whether the portal allowed the public to find, understand, and use the data. They created three dimensions in which to judge the portal's usability: (1) open dataset specification, (2) open dataset feedback, and (3) open dataset request. However, this study did not examine the implications of the data released, which, for example, may explain why Russia, an authoritative regime, scored highly on two of the dimensions.

Government Boards

As will be explored deeply in Chapter 3, I was unable to identify a catalog of types of governmental boards in the literature. However, I was able to find descriptions of specific types of common government boards. In the literature, I found information about citizen advisory boards (Municipal Research and Services Center, 2008), zoning boards of appeals (Sussna, 1961), civilian police oversight boards (Fairley, 2020), environmental management councils (Gigliotti et al., 1992), public authorities (DiNapoli, 2022), occupational licensing board (Kleiner, 2000), municipal ethics boards (Leventhal, 2008; Leventhal, 2006), and planning boards (Hochul & Rodriguez, 2021).

Citizen advisory boards are assemblies of individuals appointed by municipal authorities to provide expert advice and recommendations on specified topics or policies. These boards are typically comprised of committed volunteers, who meet specific membership prerequisites such as citizenship, residency, specialized knowledge or interest, and demographic representation. These advisory boards aim to offer insightful input to local officials, pinpoint community needs and preferences, and foster

greater citizen participation in local governance processes (Municipal Research and Services Center, 2008).

Zoning boards of appeals function as decision-making bodies that assess citizen petitions for variances from existing zoning ordinances. Rather than judicially invalidating an existing regulation, a variance grants a localized exemption to the standing ordinance based on the peculiarities of the property or situation. A citizen initiates this process by submitting a formal application detailing the variance request and its justifications to the zoning board, which then renders its decision after carefully evaluating the property characteristics and the prevailing zoning laws (Sussna, 1961).

Civilian police oversight boards emerged as an institutional mechanism in the early 20th century to bolster police accountability. The concept's genesis can be traced back to the 1930s, although the first formalized entity was established in Washington, DC, in 1948. These entities act as independent supervisory bodies responsible for scrutinizing police conduct and suggesting reforms. Their primary objectives include amplifying police accountability and transparency and providing a conduit for community grievances related to police behavior. A survey of the 100 largest U.S. cities revealed that 61 had at least one oversight function, whether performed by a board or another entity, thus underlining their widespread adoption (Fairley, 2020).

Environmental management councils were first established in New York State in 1970 as legally recognized citizen advisory groups to county and city governments. Environmental management councils aim to facilitate local participation in planning activities that affect the community's environmental quality. They also coordinate environmental issues between various stakeholders. By creating a forum within the government where citizens, environmental leaders, legislators, and department and agency heads can collaborate, community stakeholders have an opportunity to resolve environmental issues (Gigliotti et al., 1992).

A public authority is a publicly owned organization operating outside the traditional structures of state or local governments. It is designed with more autonomy than typical government operations to leverage the efficient practices commonly found in private businesses. It aims to offer a public service or infrastructure that can financially sustain itself from user fees or other forms of revenue. A board of directors, composed of ex-officio and appointed members, oversees the authority's operations (Gerwig, 1961). In New York State, there are more than 1,000 public authorities, spending more than \$78 billion annually (DiNapoli, 2022).

An occupational licensing board is an independent organization established by the government to supervise regulated professions. The board typically consists of representatives from the public and the regulated occupation itself. The boards determine qualifications for the government to grant a license to an applicant and often conduct examinations as part of the process. The agencies are self-sufficient, funding its activities through the collection of fees from applicants and licensed professionals (Kleiner, 2000).

In New York State, the mission of a municipal ethics board is to promote integrity within local government operations. These boards are composed of citizens who volunteer their services. Ethics boards inspect financial disclosure statements that government officials and employees are required to submit. These boards seek to uncover and thwart any actual or potential conflicts. They also provide ethical advice when asked for their opinion on a matter or for guidance. Ethics boards are deliberative bodies that primarily communicate through their duly rendered opinions and decisions. Additionally, ethics boards may impose penalties for ethics violations (Leventhal, 2008; Leventhal, 2006).

Planning boards are local government bodies responsible for guiding the development of their communities. They are authorized by local law or ordinance and appointed by the mayor or municipal board. Planning boards typically consist of five to seven members responsible for reviewing and approving site plans, subdivision proposals, and other land use applications. They may also be

responsible for developing comprehensive plans, zoning regulations, and other planning documents (Hochul & Rodriguez, 2021).

Democracy Cubes

The Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969) is one of the earliest and most well-known models in democratic public participation. As shown in Figure 1, citizen participation is represented as a metaphorical ladder in this one-dimensional model, with each ascending rung representing rising levels of citizen agency, control, and power. The higher the rung on the ladder, the greater the citizen agency, control, and power present. Arnstein includes a descriptive continuum of participatory power that moves from nonparticipation (no power) to varying degrees of tokenism (counterfeit power) to varying degrees of citizen participation (actual power) in addition to the eight rungs of participation. This model is rooted in the politics of the era, with a focus on social justice and civil rights.

In the most cited model of citizen participation since “A ladder of citizen participation” (Arnstein, 1969), Fung (2006) introduced the Democracy Cube framework as a methodological approach to evaluating and quantifying various forms of participation. Whereas Arnstein's ladder is a straightforward model that can be used to assess the meaningfulness of different forms of participation, Fung's democracy cube is a more nuanced model that can be used to describe the variety of ways in which citizens can be involved in democratic processes. As shown in Figure 2 on page 29, the democracy cube framework, characterized by three distinct dimensions, dissects the multifaceted nature of participation: the composition of participants in government decision-making, the modes of information exchange and decision-making among participants, and the extent of influence participants wield over outcomes. This framework facilitates independent analysis of each dimension, enabling comparative assessments due to their mutual independence. Fung (2015) later reflected on the Democracy Cube's inception, outlining three primary objectives of his original work: highlighting the diversity within public administration practices, demonstrating how these variations can uphold essential democratic values

such as legitimacy, justice, and governance efficacy, and providing a structured framework for conceptualizing participatory design through the three dimensions.

The first dimension is the method of participant selection. Fung (2016) identified eight participant selection methods in three broad categories: state, mini-publics, and public. In the state category are expert administrators and elected representatives. The forms of mini-publics are professional stakeholders, lay stakeholders, citizens randomly selected, open with targeted recruitment, and open with self-selection. From the public category, there is only one method: diffuse public sphere.

The second dimension is how participants exchange information and make decisions. Fung (2006) identifies six ways participants do this in two categories: decision-making and communication. The three decision-making modes are Deploy Technique and Expertise; Deliberate and Negotiate; and Aggregate and Bargain. The three communication modes are Develop Preferences; Express Preferences; and Listen as Spectators.

The third dimension measures the impact of participation. Fung (2006) identifies five institutional influence and authority mechanisms under three categories: direct power, exertion of influence, and no influence. Participants exert direct power either through Direct Authority or Co-Governance. Participants can exert influence through Advise and Consult or Communicative Influence. Often, citizens participate for a Personal Benefit and do not exert any influence on a government decision.

Several studies have used the Democracy Cube framework to examine public participation in different areas of public administration. Pablo et al. (2013) used this framework in a case study to qualitatively evaluate information-technology strategy in disaster-management preparedness activities. The authors examined the interviews used to create an information-technology disaster-management plan, using the Democracy Cube framework as the theoretical framework. The authors presented

several enhancements to the Democracy Cube from their case study using the framework in a real-world environment.

Van Maasakkers et al. (2020) used the Democracy Cube framework to examine public participation opportunities in land-use decisions in four shrinking cities in Ohio. The authors examined 16 planning processes that pertained to vacant homes and land. The authors analyzed formal public documents describing the public planning process for the data in this study. The authors supplemented the document analysis with eight interviews. The authors then plotted the cities' public participation along the three dimensions of the Democracy Cube. The authors found several differences along all three dimensions of the Democracy Cube for the processes, highlighting the array of participation differences available to governments.

Wehn et al. (2015) used the Democracy Cube framework to examine flood management governance in three European cities using a case study methodology. Making this study unique in research using the Democracy Cube, the authors differentiated participation at different phases of the flood process, such as the Preparation and Response Phase and the Recovery and Prevention Phase. In addition, the authors focused on citizens' use of telecommunication as a means of participation. Despite each city using citizen participation to comply with the European Flood Directive, the authors found differences in participation between the three cities. The authors also found citizen participation to differ between phases of the flood process.

One consistent adjustment in the studies using the Democracy Cube is changing the categories used to improve the fit of the case the authors are examining. Wehn, et al. (2015) completely disregarded the types of participants selected by Fung (2006) and added entirely new categories. The participant types they use range from National Organizations to Citizens. In addition, they added a new type of communication and decision mode, Implicit Data Collection, which sat beyond the previously most passive form, Listen as Spectator. The authors described Implicit Data Provision as data scraped

from social media sites that citizens provided but not with the purpose of being included in a decision-making process. Van Maasakkers, et al. (2020) added a new type of participant (i.e., Mediated, Targeted Recruitment) because the other participant categories did not fit their case. In addition, they removed three categories from Authority and Power and added three of their own. Their final five types of Authority and Power are Individual Education, Influence on Strategic Planning, Consultation on Disposition, Use & Maintain, and Direct Authority.

Contextualizing Open Government Within Public Administration

A schism in the field of public administration is due to a disagreement over its conceptual foundation. One perspective holds that the public bureaucracy is the foundation, and public management should be the dominant theme within public administration. It emphasizes the importance of business-like practices such as efficiency, strategic planning, and performance management. The alternative perspective is that the democratic polity is at the root of public administration, and the first responsibility of public administrators is to promote and maintain the political system's ability to make and act on collective choices by supporting democratic participation and decision-making. This perspective emphasizes the need for public administrators to be responsive to democratically elected leaders while upholding core societal values (Kirlin, 1996).

That schism can be traced back to the work of Woodrow Wilson (2017/1887) and Max Weber (2017/1922), who sought to segregate the study of administration from political influence. However, that dichotomy existed more in theory than practice, as political factors have exerted substantial influence on the administrative agenda, the functioning of administrative institutions, and the outputs and outcomes of administrative decision-making. In addition, public administration has a significant, independent impact on a democratic society, not only being subject to democratic control but also playing a role in safeguarding democratic values and procedures. While Wilson and Weber's perspective aimed at insulating public administration from political interference, it inadvertently downplayed the

intrinsic interconnectedness between administration and politics. As a result, recent calls have been made to include a political science perspective on power, democracy, governance, and citizenship in public administration research (Peters et al., 2022).

Waldo (1948) argued that public administration is inherently political, as public administrators must mediate between the demands of citizens and the policies of elected officials. Challenging the gospel of efficiency, he argued that the mechanic and technical components of public administration must be balanced against democratic accountability and public responsiveness. He advocated for a more holistic understanding of public administration that encompasses ethical, social, and political dimensions in addition to the managerial and technical dimensions. The role of public administrators includes fostering an environment where democratic processes and citizen participation are valued and nurtured. This approach underscores the importance of public administrators being attuned to the democratic ethos and citizen participation, effectively bridging the gap between efficient administration and democratic governance.

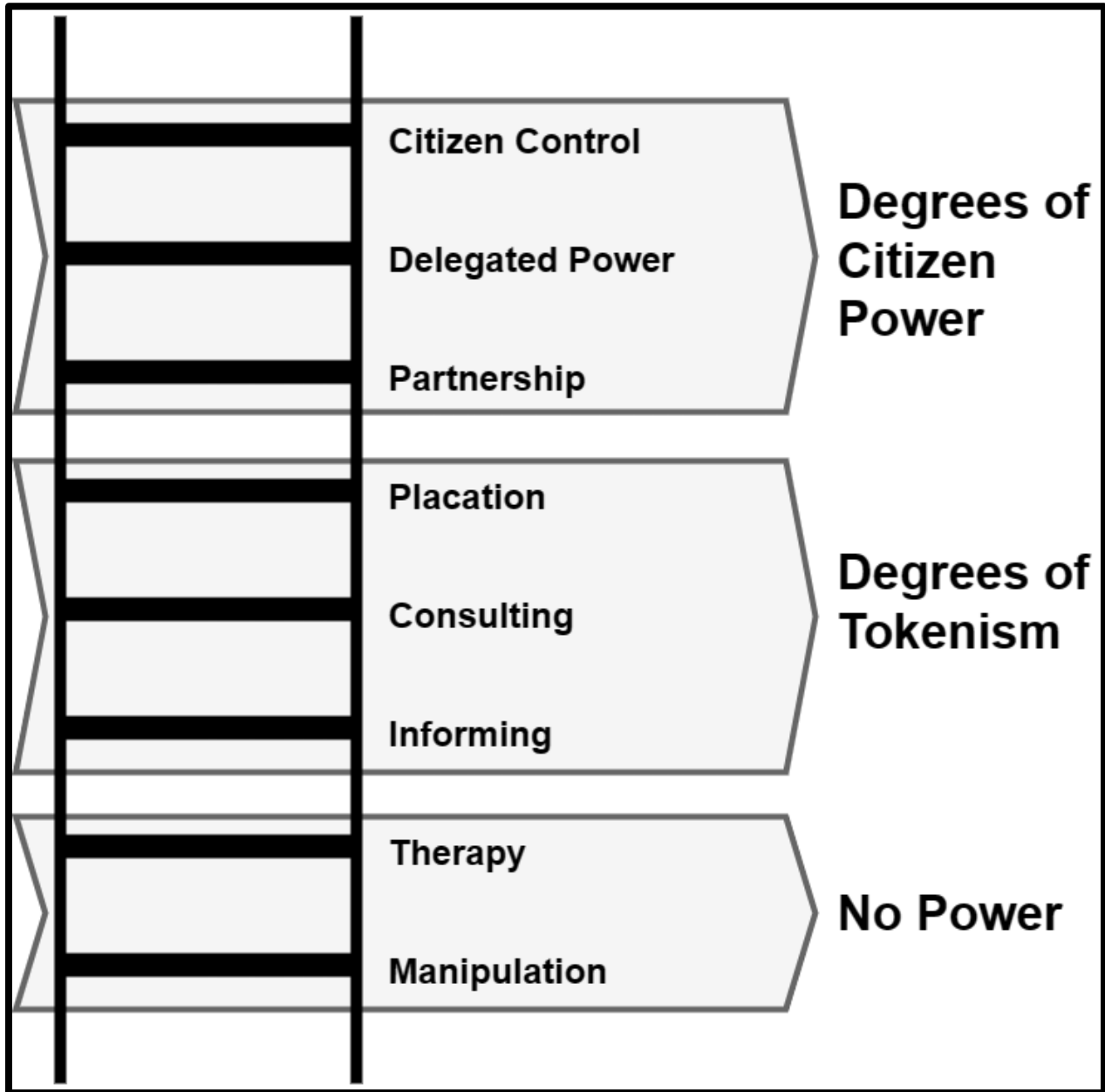
Open government and democracy are closely intertwined concepts, and their synergy is crucial for modern public administration. Open government, frequently called a democratic innovation, bolsters democratic values by enhancing transparency and fostering public participation. This transparency democratizes information access, empowering citizens to make informed decisions and participate more actively in governance. Public participation allows for a more direct form of democracy, where citizens can contribute to policymaking and governance. In sum, open government practices support a broad public deliberative conversation, essential for the democratic imperative of reaching a shared societal understanding of the problems at stake and the decisions made (Hansson et al., 2014).

Open government practices align more closely with the democratic polity perspective of public administration. They reflect a transformation in the relationship between citizens, public administration, and political authority. This transformation has reshaped the way citizens interact with and participate

in government. Political authority has trended away from top-down leadership and towards polycentric networked governance, with the role of citizens increasing (Maier-Rabler & Huber, 2012). The public administrator's role within the democratic polity has evolved in this new context. Public administrators are now expected to act as facilitators of citizen engagement and collaboration rather than mere implementers of policies. This evolution reflects a paradigm shift towards embracing the principles of open government; citizens are not only the recipients of public services but also active participants in the policy-making process (Scott & Thomas, 2016). This shift requires a reevaluation of the traditional public administration approach.

Figure 1

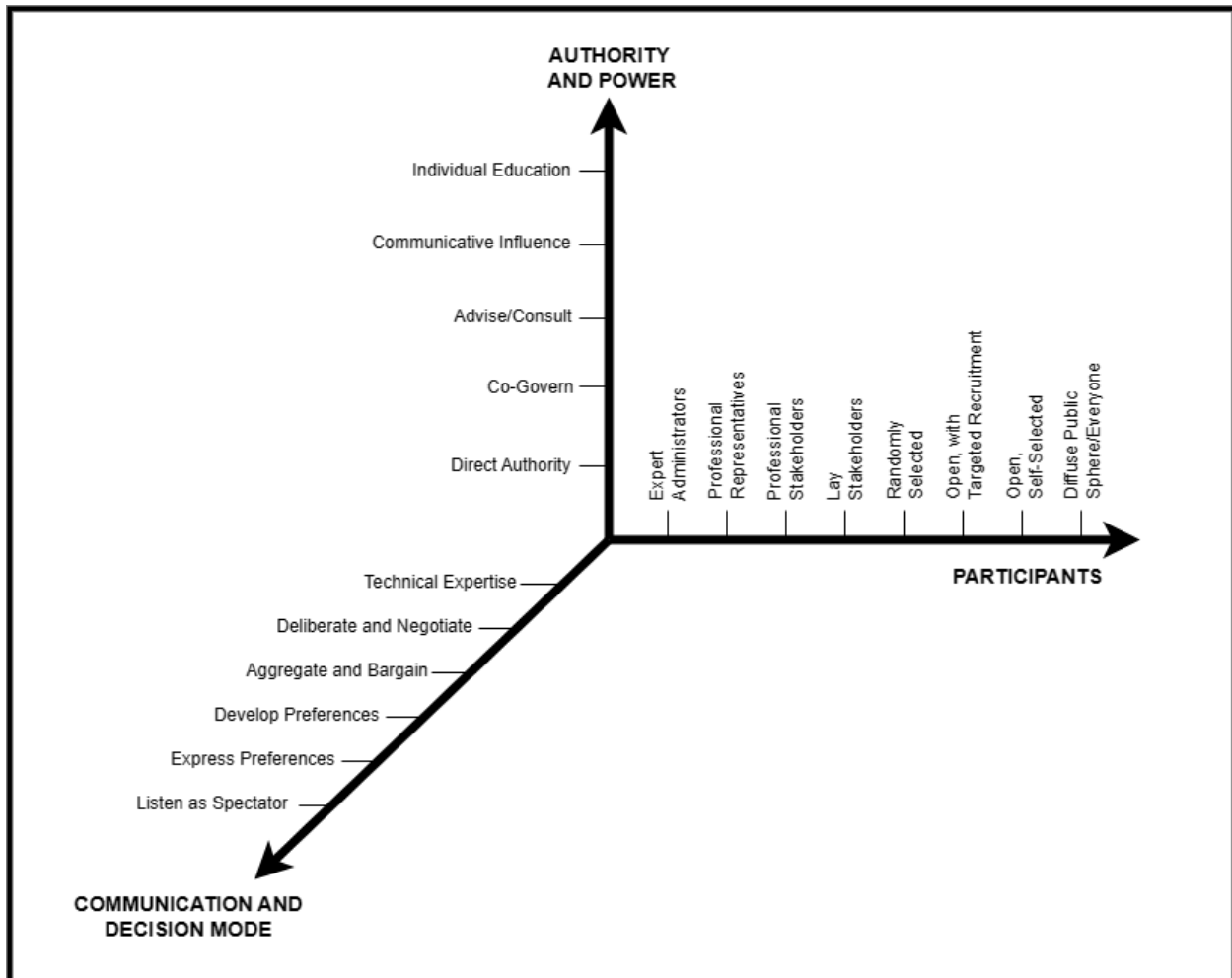
Ladder of Citizen Participation



Note. The Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969) is a one-dimensional model that visualizes the gradation of citizen involvement in decision-making processes.

Figure 2

Democracy Cube



Note. The Democracy Cube (Fung, 2006) is a three-dimensional model that represents the different ways that people can participate in government. It is based on three continuums: participatory selection; community and decision mode; and power and authority. The Democracy Cube can be used to assess different types of participatory tools. Being towards the end of the axes versus towards the center signifies a range of intensity or degree in the three different dimensions.

Chapter 3: Ideal-Type Analysis of Government Boards

A gap in the literature I encountered was a lack of a standardized methodology for comparing government boards across public sector domains. While there were numerous articles about specific, prevalent types of government boards, such as police oversight boards (Fairley, 2020), I was unable to identify an existing, standardized methodology that created or used categories of government boards. A police oversight board, for example, can, by definition, only exist for policing services; however, a classification system may be able to show that a police oversight board is a member of a broader category of government boards that governments use in public sector domains other than policing. Creating a government board typology independent of specific public sector domain is necessary to compare the types of government boards associated with each domain and develop hypotheses about why. Therefore, it was necessary for me to create an original and tailored methodology to fulfill this essential aspect of my study. Rather than use a typology based on the public sector domain the board worked in, I created one based on the board membership composition, board powers and duties, decision-making processes, and place in the policy process.

Data and Methods

In this study, I identified and categorized the various boards utilized by four city governments in New York State using content analysis of publicly available documents. By analyzing this data to identify the different types of boards, I sought to answer the research question: *What are the distinct types of local government boards based on their membership composition, powers and duties, decision-making processes, and place in the policy process?* I utilized ideal-type analysis to develop typologies of governmental boards empaneled by these four cities. An ideal type, a concept created by Max Weber to better understand and explain social phenomena, captures a social phenomenon's typical or defining features abstractly rather than aiming to represent any particular case perfectly. While not intended to

depict a social phenomenon completely, Weber thought ideal types could help social scientists discover its main aspects and build better and more comprehensive explanations (Hekman, 1983).

A qualitative research methodology called ideal-type analysis was later devised by Gerhardt (1994), based on Weber's notion of the ideal type, which constructed a typology of ideal types to provide a framework for interpreting empirical data and generating insightful findings. Typologies are an ordered system of classification of cases or participants based on their similarities and differences. The goal of a typology is to create categories that are internally coherent and externally distinct so that the cases within a category share more similarities than differences and the categories themselves are distinct from each other (Stapley et al., 2021).

Social scientists create ideal types by identifying common patterns and themes across multiple cases, abstracting and generalizing from them to develop a conceptual framework that can aid them in analyzing and comprehending complex phenomena. Ideal types enable social scientists to focus on shared essential characteristics among cases, allowing them to understand complex phenomena without becoming bogged down in individual case details (Stapley et al., 2021).

I used the ideal-type analysis research methodology because it allowed me to create a comprehensive classification system of government boards by examining and comparing the boards included in this study. Although each board can be considered as unique as a snowflake, an ideal-type analysis allowed me to identify underlying patterns and the fundamental characteristics that similar boards shared. This approach allowed me to abstract individual cases and focus on the essential features defining each board type. I selected an ideal-type analysis rather than another research method because it provided me with a structured framework to develop clear and coherent categories of boards. In subsequent stages of the research project, this framework allowed me to compare and contrast how governments use the boards outside their specific public sector domain. By creating these

well-defined ideal types, I could better understand their diversity and variations while discerning commonalities and general principles governing their functioning.

Study Participants

From May to June 2023, I conducted an exhaustive review of the Charter, Code, and websites of the New York State cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany to identify every board that may exist. The cities may have christened these bodies as boards, committees, or commissions, but for the purposes of this study, I will refer to them all as boards. In addition, this study also includes authorities and urban renewal agencies. An authority is a public entity or corporation created by or existing under the laws of New York State. Authorities may include public authorities, public benefit corporations, not-for-profit corporations affiliated with local governments, local industrial developmental agencies or authorities, or land bank corporations (DiNapoli, 2022). An urban renewal agency is a board designed to carry out municipal urban renewal programs using unique rights and powers granted to it by New York State. State authorities, which are under the jurisdiction of New York State rather than a local government, are not included in this study.

I initially identified a total of 105 boards for this study. Because this study concerns open government, and public participation is a necessary aspect of open government, this study does not include boards where all the members are elected officials or professional administrators, and no independent member of the public can serve on the board. Eight of the 105 boards were solely made up of elected officials and professional administrators, bringing the total number of boards I would review down to 97. However, the Charters and Codes listed many boards for which I could not find a webpage and was doubtful of its status without additional information substantiating its current existence. I then conducted thorough web searches in June 2023 to find information about the boards and found either a separate website, an old news article about the board, or no information. Based on the assumption that boards without a webpage or contemporaneous news articles are dormant, I did not include 32 of the

97 boards listed in a Charter or Code in this study. Therefore, this study only included the 65 boards I identified as active as of the date of the study. Table 1 on page 54 has a complete list of the boards included in this study, as well as their purpose and ideal type.

Data Collection

I used documents and information available on the internet for this study. I used a Google Chrome browser on a laptop computer running Windows 11. To collect and store this data, I utilized the Evernote note-taking application. I used the Evernote web-clipper browser extension to save web pages and documents relating to the board found online. I created a notebook stack of four notebooks, with one note devoted to capturing the data for boards in each city. Each online piece of data became a note in the corresponding notebook. I created a unique tag for each board, employing these tags to organize and categorize the information. This labeling system facilitated the retrieval and referencing of specific data in the data analysis stage of research.

To create an inventory of every board in the city and collect information about each, I searched the Charters and Codes of the four cities. All four cities in this study use an online municipal code database that provides the public access to its Charter and Code. These databases allow the public to search and browse through codes, ordinances, and other legal documents. Buffalo, Rochester, and Albany used the ecode360 service, and Syracuse used the Municode service. To identify each board and relevant sections of the Charter and Code, I read the title of every Chapter and Article in the Charters and Codes to create an initial list of boards, and if a title suggested the potential existence of a board, that Chapter or Article underwent further review. I then performed searches for the terms "board," "committee," and "commission" in the municipal code database to locate any boards I missed when only examining the titles of Articles or Sections. I then transferred all pertinent Chapters and Articles about boards into Evernote via the web-clipper browser extension. The Charter or Code typically contained the

board's legislative intent, member composition, and powers and duties. Still, some Charters and Codes referenced boards without offering these details.

Employing web crawling techniques, I examined the cities' official websites to detect any unmentioned boards in the Charters and Codes. My initial search targeted city websites for a page dedicated to all boards. Upon discovering this page, I cross-referenced the boards identified during the Charter and Code review with the listed boards. Any board not recognized in the Charter and Code review joined the inventory of Boards. I then navigated to the homepage of every City Department and Office, available as a list on the primary menu, and scrutinized these pages for mentions of boards. If a page cited a board, I cross-referenced it from the existing list and added it if absent. I then created a note in Evernote using the web-clipper browser extension.

I then turned to the Google search engine's advanced search function to find web pages for boards. Initial searches focused on the exact phrase of the board name, confining the search to the city website. Failing that, I conducted a generic search for the board's name within the city website. If unsuccessful, a final search required the city's name but removed the city website limit. Upon discovering board information, I preserved it in the relevant Evernote notebook using the web-clipper extension. However, the extent and variety of information differed across websites; some provided more thorough information than others. For instance, only 47 of the 65 currently active boards offered agendas or minutes on their website, and just 57 listed the board members. Other information some boards provide on their websites were video recordings of meetings, reports they issued, documents the public must complete to get a matter considered by the board, and other information related to their purview.

If a charter, code, or website specified that state law mandated the board, I delved into state law for extra data. Using Westlaw, I would search the New York State statutes for the board name. Westlaw, a comprehensive legal research platform, offers access to a vast legal information database,

including federal and state statutes, regulations, case law, and secondary legal materials. When I came across relevant statutes for the board, I stored that information in the Evernote notebook using the web-clipper browser extension, tagging that note with the board's name.

Data Analysis

I based my data analysis methodology on the steps recommended by Stapley, O’Keeffe, and Midgley (2021) for conducting an ideal-type analysis. First, I began by reviewing all the documents collected and stored in the online digital notebook to gain a detailed understanding of the content collected. This information included extracts from the city charter and code and state law and information from the board’s website, potentially including agendas and minutes of meetings, reports, and video recordings of meetings. I also recorded my thoughts and observations as separate digital notes available later as I progressed on the analysis. Any time I identified a potential area of bias, I documented that as well.

Next, I selected a series of categories to describe each board’s attributes. I based these categories on the literature review, the research question, and my observations. From the literature review, I was heavily influenced by the concepts introduced by Fung in his 2006 article, “Varieties of Participation in Complex Governance.” In that article, Fung describes methods of participant selection, modes of communication and decision, and forms of authority and power as the three pillars of public participation. With my initial categories selected, I listed each board as a row and each category as a column in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I then assigned values for every category for every board. After completing the initial assignment of values, I reviewed each board again several times to verify the accuracy and consistency of my judgments, adding or eliminating dimensions as I developed new insights into the boards.

I then began to compare the boards’ characteristics described in the spreadsheet to develop ideal types. I grouped the boards into clusters based on their similarities and differences in the various

categories, each cluster representing an ideal type. My goal was to create a minimal number of ideal types that were also mutually exclusive. When I could not easily place a board into a cluster because it had features that did not match any of the existing clusters, I reflected on the reasons for the difficulty and revised my categories accordingly. I also consulted my digital notes and documents to verify my judgments and to identify any potential biases that might have influenced my decisions. I assigned each cluster a label that characterized its purpose. I added a new column for the ideal type labels in the spreadsheet and assigned each board to one of them.

For each label, I identified a single board that best represented the essence of that ideal type, the optimal case. Gerhardt (1994) describes an optimal case as “the most clearcut (if not slightly overdrawn) example for the type area concretizing the respective pattern” (p. 100). I revisited the spreadsheet and carefully evaluated each board within its respective cluster. I cross-referenced my digital notes, documents, and recorded observations to ensure the accuracy and consistency of my judgments. I was able to identify an optimal case for each ideal type.

I then began to write a detailed description for each ideal type. I began by describing the features of the optimal cases that compelled me to consider them the best representative of the ideal type. I then edited the descriptions to represent all cases in that ideal group cluster. My goal was to have the description broadly depict the cases, presenting a portrayal that captured the essential features of the ideal type while recognizing the differences within each cluster that a single description could not represent.

Finally, I examined the similarities and differences between the boards within each type and between the ideal types. I then finalized my ideal cases and wrote up my findings.

Results

Analysis of Enabling Legislation and Statutes

When developing a typology of boards, I began by bifurcating my analysis into two distinct elements: board membership and granted powers. This information was readily available in the enabling legislation, which typically included legislative intent, board membership, and the power and duties of the board. Due to the dissimilar information found on the boards' websites, I relegated that data to a supplemental and supportive source. This methodology was consistent with the ideal-type analysis process because it allowed for a systematic breakdown of the attributes that defined each board. Board membership and granted powers serve as essential dimensions in understanding the diversity of governance structures across the observed boards.

Board Membership. When considering board membership, I examined the proportion of members of the public compared to elected officials and government employees and the qualifications for a member of the public to be appointed to the board. Of the 65 boards included in this study, 14 had at least one elected official or paid administrator serving in an official capacity as a voting member. In three of the boards, elected officials and employees made up a majority of the board. I did not include non-voting, ex-officio members in my analysis. In some boards not included in these figures, the city could but was not required to appoint an elected official or employee.

When examining qualifications for public members to boards, I developed four categories: (1) no or minimal qualifications; (2) generic qualifications; (3) board composition qualifications; and (4) specific qualifications. Although most boards had all their members within a single category, many boards contained a mix of members that I placed into different categories. If the city could appoint any resident to serve on the board, of which 35 of the boards had one member that met that criterion, I considered the board to have no or minimal qualifications. If the city could only appoint residents that met vague or unverifiable qualifications (e.g., interest in public transportation), of which 12 of the

boards had at least one member that met this criterion, I considered the board to have generic qualifications. If whom the city could appoint to the board was limited by who else was appointed to the board (e.g., no more than three members from the same political party), of which seven of the boards met that criterion, I considered the board to have board composition qualifications. Finally, if the city could only appoint someone who met specific qualifications that severely limited the applicant pool, of which 17 boards met that criterion, I considered the board to have specific qualifications. Table 2 on page 60 provides a summary of the membership of each board.

Powers and Duties. I then turned my attention to examining every power and duty of each board. To do this, I divided them into two distinct categories: those that involved decision-making abilities and those that did not. I considered decision-making power to be the authority vested in a board to make binding choices or determinations that significantly impact the city or area it oversees. Of the 65 boards in this study, 44 had decision-making powers. Table 3 on page 65 has a breakdown of the boards with decision-making powers.

Of the power and duties classified as decision-making, I subdivided those further into six categories: (1) "financial control;" (2) "managerial control;" (3) "discretionary administrative actions;" (4) "ministerial administrative actions;" (5) "rule-making;" and (6) "quasi-judicial." I considered financial control to be the board's ability to make decisions related to financial matters, such as budgeting or borrowing. Twelve boards have financial control. I considered managerial control to be the board's authority to make decisions concerning management and operations. Twelve boards have managerial control.

Discretionary administrative actions encompassed decisions board members were required to make based on their judgment and discretion rather than being strictly bound by specific laws or regulations. I identified 29 boards with discretionary administrative power. Ministerial administrative actions, on the other hand, referred to decisions made by board members that were bound by specific

laws, regulations, or established procedures. Seven boards have power from ministerial administrative action.

I considered rule-making to mean a board's ability to create rules affecting public services or the public. However, I did not include the development of internal board rules. Fifteen boards had at least one rule-making power. Quasi-judicial powers refer to the authority of a board to make decisions that overrule an administrative action taken by the city. Nine boards have at least one power that is considered quasi-judicial.

I then began to examine the powers and duties I did not consider to be decision-making. Table 4 on page 69 provides a breakdown of boards that had powers and duties not considered decision-making. I first identified powers and duties I considered consultive, meaning that the board did not make a final decision but had an opportunity to give its opinion. I further divided consultive powers into three subcategories: "advisory," "recommendation," and "proposal." First, I classified powers as "advisory" if it was an opportunity to provide general suggestions or guidance to another entity. Next, I classified powers into the "recommendation" category if a specific request made to another entity is required first to get the board's opinion. Finally, I classified powers into the "proposal category" if the board had the authority to suggest or put forward specific actions or measures for consideration by another entity. A total of 31 boards had at least one consultive power, with 19 having advisory powers, 20 having recommendation powers, and 11 having proposal powers.

I then identified powers and duties related to how the board collects data, of which 27 boards had at least one related power. I divided these powers into four subcategories: "survey," "referral," "hear," and "investigate." First, I classified data-collection powers into the "survey" category if the board was responsible for maintaining an ongoing inventory of this information. Second, I classified powers into the "referral" category if the public or another entity provided the information to the board for further consideration or action. Third, I categorized powers into the "hear" category if the board was

responsible for conducting public hearings or gathering testimony from stakeholders. Lastly, I classified powers as "investigate" if the board had the authority to conduct inquiries or investigations to gather information, such as providing the board with subpoena power. Three boards had at least one power in the "survey" category, seven had at least one power in the "referral" category, 23 had at least one power in the "hearing" category, and nine had at least one power in the "investigate" category.

I then identified powers and duties related to activities that were to be performed by the board. Twenty boards had at least one power that met this criterion. I then divided these activities into five subcategories: "public outreach & education," "occupational assessments," "coordination," "dispute resolution," and "providing services." First, I classified a power or duty into the "public outreach & education" category when it aimed at disseminating information, raising awareness, and promoting understanding among the public. Second, I classified powers or duties related to conducting occupational examinations or assessments to test applicants' ability to perform a job into the "occupational assessment" category. Third, I classified powers or duties related to coordinating the activities of multiple entities to achieve a shared goal into the "coordinate" category. Fourth, I classified powers or duties related to helping negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement between the city and an aggrieved member of the public into the "dispute resolution" category. Finally, I classified powers or duties in which the board actively participated in service delivery into the "provide services" category.

Ideal Type Descriptions of Boards

Advisory Board. Advisory Boards are responsible for guiding and advising city officials on specific topics, leveraging diverse perspectives to help the city improve its decision-making. They play a crucial role in addressing knowledge gaps and enhancing decision-making by offering unique perspectives. While advisory boards do not possess decision-making authority, they exert influence on the city's decisions and actions through effective communication, such as providing feedback and recommendations when requested. Additionally, advisory boards may engage in public outreach and

contribute to the provision of services. Advisory boards typically consist of ten unpaid members, and the city requires members to meet specific criteria to be appointed, such as professional or lived experience related to the subject to which they are advising.

Appeal Board. Appeal Boards are responsible for addressing disputes between citizens and administrators in a specialized administrative setting. They serve as the designated platform for citizens to contest specific administrative decisions. These boards fulfill a quasi-judicial role, ensuring citizen complaints are treated fairly and impartially. Appeal boards conduct administrative hearings to examine the details of the appeal thoroughly. The decisions rendered by these boards carry legal weight and are binding upon all parties involved. Appeal boards typically consist of five members who receive a small stipend for their services. Although there are no specific qualifications to serve on these boards, members must attend training related to the topic. Elected officials and government employees are prohibited from serving on these boards.

Governing Board. Governing boards are responsible for providing operational oversight for an independent municipal entity. These boards have significant decision-making powers, exercising autonomy to manage resources and establish policies and procedures. The board's powers may include financial control, managerial control, rule-making, and discretionary administrative actions. While some decisions require coordination with municipal officials, governing boards primarily direct the operation of the independent entity. There are no specific criteria for board members, often allowing elected officials or city employees to serve on these boards. Members typically receive a stipend, and the board usually consists of five to ten members.

Ombuds Board. Ombuds boards are responsible for investigating complaints against the city or agents in a specific public sector domain, typically related to unlawful or unprofessional actions, and seeking resolutions to those complaints. Ombuds boards receive complaints directly from the public or from other city officials who refer the complaints they have received. The board conducts investigations

and determines the merit of each complaint. It then recommends resolutions, often involving corrective actions for the city to consider. Although the board lacks direct enforcement powers, it communicates its findings to city officials. While officials are not obligated to comply with the board's requests, they must cooperate with the investigation and consider the recommendations. Cities take steps to ensure board members reflect the population affected by actions in that public sector domain, such as selecting representatives or nominees from relevant organizations or ensuring geographic diversity. Elected officials and employees are barred from being appointed to the board. Typically, the Ombuds Board consists of ten unpaid members.

Occupational Assessment Board. Occupational assessment boards are responsible for reviewing the qualifications of applicants and conducting examinations or assessments to assess the competency of applicants in regulated professions. Their duties include evaluating applicant qualifications, administering assessments, and reviewing results. When applicants pass the assessment, the board deems them qualified. These boards may also have rule-making powers related to the application process, determining who can be qualified. These boards have decision-making powers over those qualified to work in these professions. Vested parties are represented on these boards. Typically consisting of three to five member who do not receive compensation for their service.

Review Board. Review boards are responsible for reviewing and approving or denying specific requests from the public for areas the city has delegated some discretionary administrative authority to the board. However, some actions from the board are recommendations and require further review and approval from either a different review board or a city official. Requests from the public are either made to this board directly or from a referral from a different entity. The board will hold an administrative hearing to learn the facts about the matter under review and then decide. Cities typically have specific criteria for who serves on review boards, often requiring a background or vested interest in the subject

related to the requests that the board reviews. Cities do not compensate these members for their service, and the number of members can range between seven and nine members.

In addition to the above six ideal types of boards, I identified two unique types of boards. While the boards above dealt with interactions between the public and government, the below two boards deal with the internal operations of city government. While the above boards are ideal types that are public sector domain-agnostic, the below boards cannot be because governments can only apply these boards to their own operations. While the functioning of these two types of boards may have similarities with the above ideal types, they serve unique and essential functions in the internal operations of city government, and they should be distinguished from ones that are external facing. In addition, these two boards cannot be considered ideal types because they are not based on abstract concepts or principles.

Ethics Board. Ethics Boards are responsible for overseeing ethical conduct among all city officials and employees, ensuring compliance with the city's code of ethics. These boards serve as guardians of ethical standards, offering advisory opinions to officials and employees who seek guidance on ethical compliance. They also investigate complaints made by anyone who believes that an official or employee has violated the code of ethics. Ethics boards possess direct enforcement power when determining a violation has occurred. Typically, ethics boards consist of seven members, with two members being city officials and five members from the general public. This composition ensures a balanced representation and independence from political influence. The enabling legislation takes measures to establish the board's autonomy and independence. Cities do not compensate ethics board members for their service, and training is not provided.

Municipal Civil Service Board. Municipal civil service boards are responsible for administering the civil service system within their respective municipalities. This includes developing and implementing rules and regulations for the recruitment, selection, appointment, promotion, and discipline of municipal employees. The board's power includes ministerial actions and quasi-judicial

powers. The composition of the membership is based on political neutrality, ensuring that not all members of the board belong to the same political party.

Optimal Cases

Advisory Board. The City of Albany Commission on Municipal Internet Service is the optimal case of the Advisory Board ideal type. It was established by the city government with the purpose of examining the feasibility, logistics, and financing involved in establishing a high-speed internet service owned by the citizens and operated by the municipality. The Commission's primary objective is to research the feasibility of developing a public sector internet service provider that could provide faster internet speeds than those offered by private companies in Albany.

The Commission has been granted the authority to investigate the viability of implementing a municipal internet service. They can request documents, hold public hearings, and gather testimony from witnesses. Within 100 days of their establishment, the Commission must present a preliminary report, followed by a final report within 250 days. These reports will contain the Commission's findings, recommendations, and any potential recommended legislative measures. Additionally, the Commission will explore strategies to minimize the financial costs of infrastructure development and propose partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions, libraries, and other municipalities.

Comprised of ten members, the Commission consists of five individuals appointed by the City Council and five appointed by the Mayor. The City Code directs the Council and Mayor to select individuals with expertise in successful municipal internet service initiatives, finance, economic development, information technology, and other relevant fields. The Commission is a temporary body that will disband six months after presenting its final report to the Mayor and Common Council. The members serve without compensation.

Appeal Board. The City of Albany Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) is the optimal case of the Appeal Board ideal type. The BZA is an independent body responsible for hearing and deciding appeals

related to zoning and development issues. New York State General City Law Chapter 21, Article 5-A requires all cities to have a Zoning Board of Appeals and prescribes their powers. The primary responsibility of the BZA is to hear and decide appeals from orders, requirements, decisions, or determinations made by City administrative officials regarding the interpretation or implementation of the city zoning ordinances. The BZA interprets zoning ordinance provisions and grants or denies zoning variances. Additionally, the BZA hears and decides appeals related to issuing cabaret licenses.

The BZA holds monthly meetings, providing a platform for Board members to hear appeals and deliberate before deciding. During the meetings, the BZA reviews applications, listens to presentations from applicants and stakeholders, and engages in discussions and questioning to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand. The BZA seeks public input by notifying property owners through the mail that the owner of a nearby property is seeking a variance and where and when the meeting will be held where they will consider that request. A majority vote is required to carry out any action or decision. The BZA's proceedings, including minutes and records of votes, are documented and maintained as part of the public record.

Albany's Mayor appoints the five members of the BZA, subject to confirmation from the City Council, with each member receiving a five-year term. The Mayor also designates the BZA chairperson, who presides over all meetings. New York State General City Law prevents legislative body members from also serving on zoning boards of appeals and requires each member to complete a minimum of four hours of training per year. Albany compensates BZA members at a rate determined by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment.

Governing Board. The Board of the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority is the optimal case of the Governing Board ideal type. The purpose of the Authority is to operate the Syracuse Hancock International Airport. As the Authority's governing body, the Board is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Authority's operations, including financial management, operational decision-making, and

policy implementation. The Board must also ensure the Authorities operate in accordance with New York State Public Authorities Law, which grants public benefit corporations like the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority unique powers and responsibilities. New York State Public Authorities Law Article 8 Title 34 created the Authority (and its governing body), providing the legal framework within which the Authority operates.

The full Board meets every other month, and each member is also a member of one or more sub-committee(s), which meets one-to-four times annually. The Board created bylaws, which govern how the Authority operates. The bylaws delegate most responsibilities to the Executive Director; only significant decisions and required actions come before the Board.

Seven of the 11 members of the Authority Board are appointed by the Syracuse Mayor, subject to confirmation by the City Council. Other local governments appoint the four other members. Section 2825(2) of the Public Authorities Law requires that, not including members who serve on Authority boards by virtue of holding public office, the majority of the Authority Board members must be independent and cannot have a conflict of interest that would affect their judgment. Board members serve uncompensated.

Ombuds Board. The City of Buffalo Living Wage Commission is the optimal case of the Ombuds Board ideal type. Its core mandate focuses on monitoring and enforcing the City's Living Wage Ordinance, which aims to ensure that city employees and employees of contractors receive a wage that meets their basic needs. The Commission is responsible for investigating complaints of noncompliance and retaliation. It issues written findings and recommends sanctions against employers violating the Ordinance. These sanctions can encompass a range of measures, such as withholding payment, requiring wage restitution for affected employees, or even suspending or terminating ongoing contracts. The Commission sends these recommendations to the relevant City Department Head, who have the final decision-making power in implementing the sanctions.

Matters come before the City of Buffalo Living Wage Commission when a party makes a complaint alleging noncompliance with the Living Wage Ordinance or retaliation against employees. These complaints are typically submitted by employees of contractors who believe that they have not been paid the designated living wage or have faced retaliation for asserting their rights under the Ordinance. The Commission initiates investigations by reviewing the complaints and gathering relevant evidence. The Commission will hold a hearing where it provides an opportunity for involved parties to provide testimony and evidence. The Commission can subpoena involved parties to require their attendance and testimony at a hearing or the production of documents or other evidence. The members will then vote to determine the Commission's recommended actions and issue its findings within 14 days of the hearing.

The Commission is composed of nine members, each serving a three-year term, and are uncompensated for their service. These members are appointed based on a specific selection process. The Mayor and City Council both have one representative on the Board. The seven other members are representatives of various entities, including the Cornell School of Industrial Labor Relations, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, Network of Religious Communities, Buffalo Niagara Partnership, Western New York Area Labor Federation, and Western New York Welfare Monitoring Task Force. The selection process emphasizes diversity, considering factors such as race and gender, and a majority of the Commission members are required to be residents of the City of Buffalo.

Occupational Assessment Board. The City of Rochester Electrical Examining Board is the optimal case of the Occupational Assessment Board ideal type. The Board investigates and examines applicants' knowledge, technical ability, and records for electrical licenses, ensuring compliance with city ordinances and the National Electrical Code. The Board has the authority to issue licenses, determine renewal eligibility, establish conditions for license use, and investigate charges against license holders.

Electricians who meet the qualifications to be licensed apply to the Board by providing personal information, documentation of their qualifications, and other relevant supporting materials. The Board, which meets every other month, will then conduct an examination to assess the applicant's knowledge and technical ability in performing electrical work. The Board will review the application, including the examination results, to evaluate the applicant's qualifications and suitability for the license. Based on the application review, the Board will determine whether to approve the license.

The Board consists of seven members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The Board includes three electricians with a minimum of ten years of practical experience in general electrical work, one electrician with specialized experience in electrical installations, one licensed professional engineer, one electrical engineer from the utility responsible for supplying electrical power in Rochester, and the Commissioner of Neighborhood Business Development. To be eligible for board membership, individuals must be at least 30 years old, U.S. citizens, and residents of Monroe County. Each member serves a three-year term.

Review Board. The City of Buffalo Preservation Board is the optimal case of the Review Board ideal type. Its primary goal is to preserve, protect, enhance, and utilize sites, buildings, improvements, and districts with special historical or aesthetic value. The Board ensures that any exterior changes proposed for landmark properties and properties within the City's Preservation Districts align with established preservation principles by reviewing and approving or disapproving proposed modifications and construction projects that may impact the exterior of these properties. The Board conducts ongoing surveys and inventories of historically and architecturally significant properties, documenting and proposing the designation of landmarks and historic districts. The Board also advises and assists property owners and city departments, participates in nominating landmarks to the National Register of Historic Places, and collaborates with the community to raise awareness about the value of historic architecture and cultural preservation.

The Preservation Board is responsible for making recommendations to the City Council related to the construction, alteration, removal, and demolition of structures within landmarks, landmark sites, and historic districts. Items that come before the Preservation Board are typically applications for certificates of appropriateness, certificates of no effect, or certificates of exception. These applications are submitted by individuals, groups, or associations that wish to undertake construction, alteration, removal, or demolition work that would affect the exterior of a property within a designated area. Within 45 days of receipt of the application, the Board approves or denies it and provides a written recommendation to the City Council. The Preservation Board considers applications at its regular biweekly meetings, reviewing the proposed plans, evaluating them based on the code and design guidelines, and may hold public hearings if necessary.

The Buffalo Preservation Board consists of nine residents of Buffalo who cannot be officers or employees that serve voluntarily and do not receive compensation for their service. The Mayor appoints six members, subject to confirmation by the City Council, including representatives from architecture, architectural history, real estate, and other related disciplines. The President of the Council appoints three members. Additionally, the Director of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society and the president of the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier, or their designees, also serve on the Board. All appointments are for three-year terms.

Descriptive Data

Of the 65 government boards across the four cities, four primary types of boards were identified: advisory boards (23%), review boards (25%), governing boards (17%), and occupational assessment boards (11%). Advisory boards were the most common, covering a wide range of issues from youth services to municipal internet. The number of these boards varied by city, with the highest having six advisory boards and the lowest having one. Review boards were next, focused primarily on planning and historical preservation. Governing boards were mostly concerned with water and

wastewater systems, while occupational assessment boards dealt with professional licensing for trades occupations. Other types of boards included appeal boards (12%), ombuds boards (6%), civil service boards (3%), and ethics boards (3%). Table 5 on page 74 summarizes the descriptive data.

Discussion

How Do Boards Differ from the Varieties of Participation Framework?

Government boards can be easily mapped out along the three dimensions (i.e., democracy cube) described by Fung (2006): “who participates, how participants communicate with one another and make decisions together, and how discussions are linked with policy or public action (p. 66).” When governments form boards, what Fung classifies as lay stakeholders, unpaid citizens who invest their time and energy on a board because it is something they care about, constitute them. Occasionally, however, the city may require a professional stakeholder to be on a government board, such as a representative of a specific organization. Government board members usually deliberate and negotiate to communicate and make decisions. These board members take in information and interact before coming to a decision. However, for boards that require training (e.g., Zoning Board of Appeals), the board may also deploy technical expertise. When analyzing government boards, the dimension in Fung’s model with the most variation is authority and power, with the authority falling into one of three different categories. First, government boards may provide advice and consultation, as is the case for advisory boards, where the government has agreed to listen to a board’s recommendations. The board may also cogovern with the government, where the government and the board share power over a matter. Additionally, as with a governing board, the government gives complete power to the board. Although using this framework to classify boards provides some helpful information, it is ultimately limited since doing so results in significantly different boards categorized together.

This framework is premised on public participation being limited to enacting or influencing policy, a legislative function, from a position of citizens trying to maximize their self-interest. However,

this study found that a board's *raison d'etre* was often not to influence policy; government boards often served executive (e.g., approve a site plan) and quasi-judicial functions (e.g., reduce the assessor's valuation). Fung (2015) later hinted at the model's shortcomings, writing, "...we usually think of the democratic role of citizens as influencing...public policies. From a broader vantage, however, democratic governance ought to include a fuller range of activities through which individuals influence organizational decisions and actions (p. 519)." In the four cities in this study, boards frequently serve other roles in the policy process besides policy development. In doing so, citizens demonstrate that they participate for reasons other than maximizing their self-interest. An addition to the Varieties of Participation framework should be where the board's action takes place in the public policy process – in the development of policy, in the execution of policy, or in the adjudication of policy-related issues.

A second suggestion I will make on how to improve this framework is the centrality of how boards acquire the information they use to make decisions or recommendations. This criticism is related to the first, as boards serve multiple purposes in the policy process other than influencing policy development. In these cases, members are not maximizing their self-interest and relying solely on their ideas and emotions; they act as neutral arbiters, factfinders, and community representatives. Members come to their positions and collectively decide by consuming data concerning the matter they are examining. The four data collection methods I identified in this study (i.e., survey, referral, hear, and investigate) represent very different ways a matter comes before the board and how it gathers data, influencing their decisions or recommendations. It also provides valuable context for the board's relationship with the government and citizens. Furthermore, identifying how boards acquire information describes how their work implements the values of open and participatory government, not just that the board is open and participatory by its mere existence.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This analysis attempts to fill a gap in the literature by identifying the types of boards city governments use and to what extent they contribute to open government. The democracy cube framework developed by Fung (2006) served as the foundational theoretical lens for this investigation. However, this framework was not able to provide a nuanced understanding of the government boards found in this study as it classified vastly different boards as identical. To compensate for this shortcoming, I identified two dimensions that made this framework more robust in my analysis: the participatory tool's position in the policy process and how participants acquire the information they use to make decisions or recommendations. These new dimensions provide a future research direction in the examination of open government practices, allowing for a more detailed and accurate characterization of how the public participates in their government. Future research may include examining alternative participatory tools using the dimensions I identified.

Rather than starting with the Democracy Cube model, future research might use an alternative theoretical frameworks as a starting point for ideal-type analysis of government boards. This research could either adapt existing theories or develop new models that better capture the intricacies of government boards. Using a different framework may produce different ideal types based on other criteria. A re-evaluation of participation, not merely as a step following policy development but as an ongoing process throughout various stages of the policy process, may herald a broader shift in theoretical paradigms.

The research method, ideal type analysis, has several limitations. Most notably, this method is reductive, focusing on particular characteristics and ignoring others in order to form the ideal type. Ideal types may provide conceptual clarity but do not necessarily ensure empirical accuracy. Additionally, creating an ideal type can inadvertently insert normative judgments about what characteristics define the cases, thereby reflecting my biases.

Replicating this study using significantly more cities of various sizes and locations would enhance the external validity of the results. The findings for four mid-sized cities in New York may differ in municipalities with varying populations, geographic areas, and administrative cultures. An expanded study would yield a richer, more comprehensive understanding of the diversity of government board functions across different contexts.

I will note a final limitation is the study relied on publicly available documents. Such an approach inherently limits the understanding one can ascertain about the boards. Future research could substantially benefit from a more comprehensive data collection strategy, such as conducting interviews with board members, public administrators, and other key stakeholders. By integrating these perspectives, future research can offer a more robust view of government boards.

Table 1

Boards Included in the Study

Board	Purpose	Type
Albany		
Albany Housing Authority	Provide safe, decent, and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income Buffalo residents.	Governing Board
Albany Water Board	Manage the supply and distribution of safe drinking water to residential, commercial, and industrial customers within Albany.	Governing Board
Albany Municipal Water Finance Authority	Manage and finance water-related infrastructure and services within Albany.	Governing Board
Board of Assessment Review	Provide an avenue for property owners to challenge their property assessments and seek a fair and impartial review of their complaints regarding their property assessments.	Appeal Board
Board of Zoning Appeals	Provide an avenue for property owners to seek variances from zoning regulations and challenge decisions made by local zoning authorities.	Appeal Board
City of Albany Industrial Development Agency	Provide financial incentives, including tax exceptions, to businesses and other organizations investing in or expanding in Albany.	Review Board
Commission on Human Rights	Help foster an atmosphere of respect and celebration of the diversity in the municipality.	Advisory Board
Commission on Municipal Internet Service	Research the feasibility, logistics, and financing of creating a municipally run, citizen-owned high-speed internet service.	Advisory Board
Community Choice Aggregation Oversight Board	Provide oversight over the Community Choice Aggregation Program to aggregate the energy supply needs of residents and small commercial customers and to negotiate and enter into energy supply agreements on behalf of eligible citizens.	Advisory Board
Community Police Review Committee	Improve communication between the Police Department and the community, increase police accountability and credibility with the public, and create a complaint review process that is free from bias and informed of actual police practices.	Ombuds Board
Examining Board of Electricians	Investigate and examine the qualifications and fitness of each applicant for an electrician license.	Occupational Assessment Board

Board	Purpose	Type
Examining Board of Plumbers	Investigate and examine the qualifications and fitness of each applicant for a plumbing license.	Occupational Assessment Board
Historic Resources Commission	Preserve and protect places, sites, buildings, structures, works of art, and other objects having a special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value	Review Board
Living Wage Compliance Committee	Advise city officials of the results and impact of the Living Wage Law.	Advisory Board
Municipal Civil Service Commissions	Ensure fair hiring and promotion in public service jobs based on merit and fitness.	Occupational Assessment Board
Planning Board of the City of Albany	Ensure that development is conducted per Albany's comprehensive plan.	Review Board
Public, Education, and Government Access Oversight Board	Oversee the cable television public access facility/studio and general implementation of public, educational, and governmental access.	Advisory Board
Sustainability Advisory Committee	Recommend methods for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, conserving resources, promoting sustainable practices, and empowering residents to live sustainably.	Advisory Board
Buffalo		
Bicycle/ Pedestrian Advisory Board	Help find cooperative solutions for various transportation problems experienced by cyclists, pedestrians, and persons with disabilities.	Advisory Board
Board of Assessment Review	Provide an avenue for property owners to challenge their property assessments and seek a fair and impartial review of their complaints regarding their property assessments.	Appeal Board
Buffalo Arts Commission	Maintain, grow, and curate the City's Public Art Collection.	Advisory Board
Buffalo Sewer Authority	Manage and maintain the sewage and wastewater systems within Buffalo.	Governing Board
Buffalo Environmental Management Council	Advise on present and proposed methods and plans for preserving, protecting, enhancing, and managing the environment.	Review Board
Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority	Provide safe, decent, and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income Buffalo residents.	Governing Board

Board	Purpose	Type
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation	Acquire, remediate, and manage distressed properties and engage in related real estate development activities.	Governing Board
Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency	Carry out municipal urban renewal programs using unique rights and powers granted to it by New York State	Governing Board
Buffalo Water Board	Manage the supply and distribution of safe drinking water to residential, commercial, and industrial customers within Buffalo.	Governing Board
Buffalo Municipal Water Finance Authority	Manage and finance water-related infrastructure and services within Buffalo.	Governing Board
Citizens Advisory Commission on Reapportionment	Advise and recommend to the common council the appropriate division of the city into districts for the election of council members.	Advisory Board
Citizens Planning Council	Recommend a capital budget to the Mayor's Office based on capital budget requests from City departments, not-for-profit institutions, and the community.	Review Board
Citizens Salary Review Commission	Review elected city officers' salaries and recommend changes to the Common Council.	Advisory Board
Commission on Citizens Rights and Community Relations	Works to eliminate prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, and discrimination to encourage equality of treatment.	Advisory Board
Ethics Board	Ensure ethical conduct among its officials and employees, upholding ethical standards in governance and administration.	Ethics Board
Examining Board of Electricians	Investigate and examine the qualifications and fitness of each applicant for an electrician license.	Occupational Assessment Board
Examining Board of Plumbers	Investigate and examine the qualifications and fitness of each applicant for a plumbing license.	Occupational Assessment Board
Living Wage Commission	Evaluate the efficacy and enforcement of the Living Wage Ordinance.	Ombuds Board
City Planning Board	Ensure that development is conducted per Buffalo's green code.	Review Board
Preservation Board	Safeguard and promote the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Buffalo.	Review Board

Board	Purpose	Type
Zoning Board of Appeals	Provide an avenue for property owners to seek variances from zoning regulations and challenge decisions made by local zoning authorities.	Appeal Board
Rochester		
Board of Assessment Review	Provide an avenue for property owners to challenge their property assessments and seek a fair and impartial review of their complaints regarding their property assessments.	Appeal Board
Board of Examiners of Stationary Engineers and Refrigeration Operators	Investigate and examine the qualifications and fitness of each applicant for a stationary engineer or refrigeration operator license.	Occupational Assessment Board
Board of Trustees of Public Library	Provide governance and oversight for the Rochester library system.	Governing Board
Environmental Commission	Advise on present and proposed methods and plans for the preservation, protection, enhancement, and management of the environment.	Review Board
Ethics Board	Ensure that officers and employees of the City of Rochester adhere to clear and reasonable standards of ethical conduct.	Ethics Board
Examining Board of Electricians	Investigate and examine the qualifications and fitness of each applicant for an electrician license.	Occupational Assessment Board
Examining Board of Plumbers	Investigate and examine the qualifications and fitness of each applicant for a plumbing license.	Occupational Assessment Board
Mayors Youth Advisory Council	Provide a platform for young people in the community to engage with local government and have a voice in shaping policies and initiatives that affect them.	Advisory Board
Municipal Civil Service Commissions	Ensure fair hiring and promotion in public service jobs based on merit and fitness.	Occupational Assessment Board
Planning Commission	Ensure that development is conducted per their comprehensive plan, Rochester 2034.	Review Board
Police Accountability Board	Fairly investigate and make determinations respecting complaints of misconduct involving sworn officers.	Ombuds Board
Preservation Board	Safeguard and promote the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Rochester.	Review Board

Board	Purpose	Type
Project Review Committee	Review and make recommendations on major site plans.	Review Board
Rochester Economic Development Corp.	Support middle- and low-income neighborhoods by investing in small businesses and urban entrepreneurs in the City of Rochester.	Governing Board
Rochester Land Bank Corporation	Return underutilized property to productive use.	Governing Board
Rochester Housing Authority	Provide safe, decent, and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income Rochester residents.	Governing
Zoning Board of Appeals	Provide an avenue for property owners to seek variances from zoning regulations and challenge decisions made by local zoning authorities.	Appeal Board
Syracuse		
Board of Assessment Review	Provide an avenue for property owners to challenge their property assessments and seek a fair and impartial review of their complaints regarding their property assessments.	Appeal Board
Citizen Review Board	Provide a citizen-controlled process for reviewing grievances involving members of the Syracuse police department and provide a non-exclusive alternative to civil litigation.	Ombuds Board
Landmark Preservation Board	Safeguard and promote the historical and architectural heritage of the City of Syracuse.	Review Board
Planning Commission	Ensure that development is conducted per the City of Syracuse Comprehensive Plan	Review Board
Public Art Commission	Enhance the visual and aesthetic environment of public spaces in the city of Syracuse.	Review Board
Redistricting Commission	Review and recommend adjustments to the boundaries of council districts within the city.	Advisory Board
Syracuse Economic Development	Administers the city's revolving loan fund for economic development.	Review Board
Syracuse Industrial Development Agency	Provide financial incentives, including tax exceptions, to businesses and other organizations that are investing in or expanding in Syracuse.	Review Board
Syracuse Housing Authority	Provide safe, decent, and affordable housing for low- and moderate-income Syracuse residents.	Governing

Board	Purpose	Type
Syracuse Regional Airport Authority	Operate the Syracuse Hancock International Airport and foster the development of safe, secure, and efficient aviation services.	Governing Board
Youth Advisory Council	Engage Syracuse’s young people in local and state government.	Advisory Board
Zoning Board of Appeals	Provide an avenue for property owners to seek variances from zoning regulations and challenge decisions made by local zoning authorities.	Appeal Board

Table 2

Board Composition

Board	Not Appointed by City	Elected Official or Employee	No or Minimal Quals.	Generic Quals.	Board Comp. Quals.	Specific Quals.	Total
Albany							
Albany Housing Authority	2	0	5	0	0	0	7
Albany Water Board	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Albany Municipal Water Finance Authority	2	0	5	0	0	0	7
Albany Parking Authority	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Board of Assessment Review	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Board of Zoning Appeals	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
City of Albany Industrial Development Agency	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
Commission on Human Rights	0	0	9	0	0	0	9
Commission on Municipal Internet Service	0	0	0	10	0	0	10
Community Choice Aggregation Oversight Board	0	3	1	0	0	1	5
Community Police Review Committee	0	0	9	0	0	0	9
Examining Board of Electricians	0	1	0	0	0	4	5
Examining Board of Plumbers	0	2	0	0	0	3	5
Historic Resources Commission	0	0	0	9	0	0	9

Board	Not Appointed by City	Elected Official or Employee	No or Minimal Quals.	Generic Quals.	Board Comp. Quals.	Specific Quals.	Total
Living Wage Compliance Committee	0	0	0	5	0	0	5
Municipal Civil Service Commissions	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Planning Board of the City of Albany	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Public, Education and Government Access Oversight Board	3	1	6	0	0	1	11
Sustainability Advisory Committee	5	0	10	0	0	0	15
Buffalo							
Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board	0	1	0	9	0	1	11
Board of Assessment Review	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Buffalo Arts Commission	0	0	0	15	0	0	15
Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority	2	0	5	0	0	0	7
Buffalo Sewer Authority	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Buffalo Environmental Management Council	1	0	0	8	0	0	9
Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency	0	7	2	0	0	0	9
Buffalo Water Board	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
Buffalo Municipal Water Finance Authority	2	3	2	0	0	0	7
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation	2	7	6	0	0	4	19

Board	Not Appointed by City	Elected Official or Employee	No or Minimal Quals.	Generic Quals.	Board Comp. Quals.	Specific Quals.	Total
Citizens Advisory Commission on Reapportionment	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
Citizens Planning Council	2	0	13	0	0	0	15
Citizens Salary Review Commission	0	0	0	9	0	0	9
Commission on Citizens Rights and Community Relations	0	0	0	11	0	0	11
Ethics Board	0	2	0	5	0	0	7
Examining Board of Electricians	0	0	0	0	0	5	5
Examining Board of Plumbers	0	2	0	0	0	3	5
Living Wage Commission	7	0	2	0	0	0	9
City Planning Board	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
Preservation Board	2	0	3	0	0	6	11
Zoning Board of Appeals	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Rochester							
Board of Assessment Review	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Board of Examiners of Stationary Engineers and Refrigeration Operators	1	0	0	0	0	5	6
Board of Trustees of Public Library	2	0	9	0	0	0	11
Environmental Commission	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
Ethics Board	0	2	0	0	5	0	7

Board	Not Appointed by City	Elected Official or Employee	No or Minimal Quals.	Generic Quals.	Board Comp. Quals.	Specific Quals.	Total
Examining Board of Electricians	0	1	0	0	0	6	7
Examining Board of Plumbers	0	2	0	0	0	3	5
Mayors Youth Advisory Council	0	0	Unlimited	0	0	0	Unlimited
Municipal Civil Service Commissions	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Planning Commission	0	0	0	0	7	0	7
Police Accountability Board	0	0	1	0	4	4	9
Preservation Board	0	0	1	2	0	4	7
Project Review Committee	0	6	0	0	0	3	9
Rochester Industrial Development Agency	8	0	5	0	0	0	13
Rochester Land Bank Corporation	0	5	2	0	0	0	7
Rochester Housing Authority	2	0	5	0	0	0	7
Zoning Board of Appeals	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Syracuse							
Board of Assessment Review	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Citizen Review Board	0	0	0	6	5	0	11
Landmark Preservation Board	0	0	0	0	0	9	9
Planning Commission	0	0	3	0	2	0	5
Public Art Commission	0	0	2	0	0	9	11

Board	Not Appointed by City	Elected Official or Employee	No or Minimal Quals.	Generic Quals.	Board Comp. Quals.	Specific Quals.	Total
Redistricting Commission	0	0	Unlimited	0	0	0	Unlimited
Syracuse Economic Development Corporation	0	0	13	0	0	0	13
Syracuse Industrial Development Agency	0	0	5	0	0	0	5
Syracuse Housing Authority	2	0	5	0	0	0	7
Syracuse Regional Airport Authority	4	0	7	0	0	0	11
Youth Advisory Council	0	0	Unlimited	0	0	0	Unlimited
Zoning Board of Appeals	0	0	6	0	0	0	6

Table 3

Boards with Decision-Making Powers

Board	Financial Control	Managerial Control	Discretionary Administrative Decisions	Ministerial Administrative Actions	Rulemaking	Quasi-Judicial
Albany						
Albany Housing Authority	X	X	X			
Albany Water Board	X	X	X		X	
Albany Municipal Water Finance Authority	X					
Albany Parking Authority	X	X	X			
Board of Assessment Review						X
Board of Zoning Appeals			X			X
City of Albany Industrial Development Agency			X			
Community Choice Aggregation Oversight Board		X				
Examining Board of Electricians				X		
Examining Board of Plumbers				X	X	
Historic Resources Commission					X	
Municipal Civil Service Commissions			X	X	X	

Board	Financial Control	Managerial Control	Discretionary Administrative Decisions	Ministerial Administrative Actions	Rulemaking	Quasi-Judicial
Planning Board of the City of Albany			X			
Buffalo						
Board of Assessment Review						X
Buffalo Sewer Authority	X	X	X		X	
Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority	X	X	X			
Buffalo Urban Development Corporation	X	X	X			
Buffalo Urban Renewal Agency	X	X	X		X	
Buffalo Water Board	X	X	X		X	
Buffalo Municipal Water Finance Authority	X					
Commission on Citizens Rights and Community Relations			X			
Ethics Board			X		X	
City Planning Board			X			
Preservation Board			X			
Zoning Board of Appeals			X			X
Rochester						
Board of Assessment Review						X

Board	Financial Control	Managerial Control	Discretionary Administrative Decisions	Ministerial Administrative Actions	Rulemaking	Quasi-Judicial
Board of Examiners of Stationary Engineers and Refrigeration Operators				X		
Board of Trustees of Public Library		X	X		X	
Environmental Commission						X
Ethics Board			X		X	
Examining Board of Electricians				X		
Examining Board of Plumbers				X	X	
Municipal Civil Service Commissions			X	X	X	
Planning Commission			X			
Preservation Board			X		X	
Rochester Industrial Development Agency	X	X	X			
Rochester Land Bank Corporation	X	X	X			
Rochester Housing Authority	X	X	X			
Zoning Board of Appeals			X			X
Syracuse						
Board of Assessment Review						X
Landmark Preservation Board			X			

Board	Financial Control	Managerial Control	Discretionary Administrative Decisions	Ministerial Administrative Actions	Rulemaking	Quasi-Judicial
Planning Commission			X			
Public Art Commission			X			
Syracuse Economic Development Corp.			X			
Syracuse Industrial Development Agency	X	X	X		X	
Syracuse Housing Authority	X	X	X			
Syracuse Regional Airport Authority	X	X			X	
Zoning Board of Appeals			X			X

Table 4

Boards with Non-Decision-Making Powers

Board	<u>Consult</u>			<u>Data Collection</u>				<u>Activities</u>				Report	
	Advise	Recommend	Proposal	Survey	Referral	Hear	Investigate	Public Outreach	Occupation Assess	Coord.	Dispute Resolution		Provide Services
Albany													
Board of Assessment Review						X							
Board of Zoning Appeals						X							
Commission on Human Rights	X		X			X		X			X		X
Community Choice Aggregation Oversight Board													X
Community Police Review Committee					X		X						X
Examining Board of Electricians									X				
Examining Board of Plumbers									X				
Historic Resources Commission		X		X				X					X
Living Wage Compliance Committee			X										X
Municipal Civil Service Commissions									X				

Board	<u>Consult</u>		<u>Data Collection</u>				<u>Activities</u>				Report		
	Advise	Recommend	Proposal	Survey	Referral	Hear	Investigate	Public Outreach	Occupation Assess	Coord.		Dispute Resolution	Provide Services
Planning Board of the City of Albany		X				X							X
Public, Education and Government Access Oversight Board	X	X						X				X	
Sustainability Advisory Committee	X							X		X		X	X
Buffalo													
Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board		X	X										X
Board of Assessment Review						X							
Buffalo Arts Commission	X	X	X					X					X
Buffalo Environmental Management Council	X	X	X			X		X		X			X
Citizens Advisory Commission on Reapportionment			X			X							
Citizens Planning Council			X										X
Citizens Salary Review Commission			X										
Commission on Citizens Rights and Community Relations			X		X	X	X				X	X	
Ethics Board	X	X			X		X						

Board	<u>Consult</u>			<u>Data Collection</u>				<u>Activities</u>				Report	
	Advise	Recommend	Proposal	Survey	Referral	Hear	Investigate	Public Outreach	Occupation Assess	Coord.	Dispute Resolution		Provide Services
Examining Board of Electricians									X				
Examining Board of Plumbers									X				
Living Wage Commission		X			X	X	X						X
City Planning Board		X				X							X
Preservation Board	X	X		X		X		X					
Zoning Board of Appeals						X							
Rochester													
Board of Assessment Review						X							
Board of Examiners of Stationary Engineers and Refrigeration Operators							X		X				
Environmental Commission	X	X		X	X								
Ethics Board		X					X						
Examining Board of Electricians							X		X				
Examining Board of Plumbers									X				
Mayors Youth Advisory Council	X												

Board	<u>Consult</u>			<u>Data Collection</u>				<u>Activities</u>				Report	
	Advise	Recommend	Proposal	Survey	Referral	Hear	Investigate	Public Outreach	Occupation Assess	Coord.	Dispute Resolution		Provide Services
Municipal Civil Service Commissions									X				
Planning Commission	X	X				X							
Police Accountability Board	X	X			X	X	X	X					X
Preservation Board	X	X				X							
Project Review Committee	X	X											
Zoning Board of Appeals						X							
Syracuse													
Board of Assessment Review						X							
Citizen Review Board	X	X			X	X	X	X			X		
Landmark Preservation Board	X	X				X							
Metropolitan Commission on Aging	X							X		X			
Planning Commission	X	X				X							
Public Art Commission	X	X	X										
Redistricting Commission			X			X							
Youth Advisory Council	X												

Board	<u>Consult</u>			<u>Data Collection</u>				<u>Activities</u>				Report
	Advise	Recommend	Proposal	Survey	Referral	Hear	Investigate	Public Outreach	Occupation Assess	Coord.	Dispute Resolution	
Zoning Board of Appeals						X						

Table 5

Ideal Board Type Characteristics

Board Type	Responsibilities	Decision-Making Powers	Member Composition	Member Criteria	Compensation
Advisory Board	Guiding and advising city officials, providing feedback and recommendations, public outreach.	No decision-making authority, but influence through communication.	Ten members.	Professional or lived experience related to the subject.	Unpaid
Appeal Board	Addressing disputes, contesting administrative decisions, conducting administrative hearings.	Quasi-judicial role, decisions are legally binding.	5 members with stipend.	No specific qualifications, but training required.	Stipend
Governing Board	Operational oversight for a municipal entity, managing resources, establishing policies.	Significant decision-making powers, including financial and managerial control.	5 to 10 members, often elected officials or city administrators.	Often elected officials or city administrators.	Stipend
Ombuds Board	Investigating complaints, recommending resolutions.	Lacks direct enforcement powers, but communicates findings to officials.	Ten members.	Reflects the population affected, representatives from relevant organizations, or geographic diversity.	Unpaid
Occupational Assessment Board	Reviewing qualifications, conducting assessments in regulated professions.	Decision-making powers over qualification in professions.	3 to 5 members.	Vested parties, such as other occupational license holders.	Unpaid
Review Board	Reviewing/approving/denying requests, holding hearings.	Some decision-making authority; recommendations may require further review/approval.	7 to 9 unpaid members.	Background or vested interest in the subject matter.	Unpaid

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Board Types

Board Type	Albany	Buffalo	Rochester	Syracuse	Total
Advisory Board	6	5	1	3	15
Appeal Board	2	2	2	2	8
Ethics Board	0	1	1	0	2
Governing Board	2	5	3	1	11
Occupational Assessment Board	2	2	3	0	7
Ombuds Board	1	1	1	1	4
Review Board	3	4	4	5	16
Civil Service Board	1	0	1	0	2
Total	17	20	16	12	65

Chapter 4: Public Participation through Government Boards: A Critical Analysis

I will now turn to whether it is appropriate to consider voluntary government board membership as a form of public participation. To answer this narrow question, the broader question of “What is public participation?” must first be explored. To answer this, I will deconstruct three definitions of public participation and explore the concepts contained therein. I selected these three definitions because each epitomizes a distinct perspective on participation: the state, the participant, and society. I do not suggest that these perspectives should be taken literally or that there is a perspective that is inherently superior to the others. Rather, my aim is to illustrate how varying interpretations of public participation can shape our perception of voluntary government board membership as a participatory tool. These perspectives provide an analytical framework to critically assess the role of government board membership in the broader context of public participation.

Three Different Perspectives of Participation

State-Centric Perspective

The Open Government Directive (Orszag, 2009) states, “Participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that their government can make policies with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society.” This definition suggests three things. First, the act of participation is the contribution of ideas and expertise by members of the public. The Directive does not define the public, and it is open to interpretation if it means that every citizen must be allowed to contribute or if it allows for alternative ways for the government to receive external ideas and expertise. However, since expertise is “widely dispersed in society,” the members of the public that participation is meant to include extends beyond the professional stakeholders and other types of insiders who have historically had more access to decision-makers. Second, participation aims to give governments ideas and expertise to improve their policies, and those ideas and expertise are not already available in government. This definition reflects a state-centric position by emphasizing the benefits to the

government of creating processes that allow for public participation. Third, although the public may contribute ideas and expertise, the government decides if and how it uses them. Participation augments existing decision-making processes rather than supplanting them.

Participant-Centric Perspective

Nitatchi and Leighninger (2015) define public participation as "...an umbrella term that describes the activities by which people's concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues (p. 6)." This definition differs from that of the Open Government Directive by referring to public participation as an umbrella term, suggesting that participation includes a broader range of activities than soliciting ideas and expertise. By not listing any acts, this definition suggests that public participation is defined primarily by its purpose. However, one can infer that governments must create a methodology for learning the public's concerns, needs, interests, and values in order to successfully incorporate them into decisions and actions.

Interestingly, the purpose of participation is significantly broader than that of the Open Government Directive in two ways. First, rather than make policies with the benefit of additional information, the purpose of public participation, according to Natachi and Leighninger, is to include the public's concerns, needs, interests, and values. Whereas the Open Government Directive presents participation as a way to bring outside expertise into government, Natachi and Leighninger propose a more democratic ideal, whereby the very essence of what the public values and needs shape governmental actions. This orientation is more participant-centric, as it advocates for integrating participants' whole-self into government processes, seeking emotions, personal experiences, and subjective values, in addition to their expertise. Second, while the Open Government Directive aimed to improve government policies, Nitatchi and Leighninger's definition suggests a more encompassing goal of incorporating the public's values into all decisions and actions related to public matters and issues. Whereas, in the Open Government Directive, public participation served more as an ideation function of

assisting governments in creating and improving policies, Nitatchi and Leighninger present it as the integration of the public into all aspects of government. In this conception of participation, participants and the government are partners in governance, with participation supplementing government actions and decisions.

Societal-Centric Perspective

Arnstein, writing in 1969, said:

Citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power. It is the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future. It is the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society. (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216)

This perspective differs significantly from more contemporary works on the topic. First, this definition is explicitly rooted in a power imbalance between various groups in society. Arnstein's conception of citizen participation portrays it as a tool for addressing systemic inequalities. She emphasizes that public participation is not solely about contributing ideas or having concerns incorporated into decisions but rather about challenging and reshaping power dynamics within society. Arnstein's definition underscores the inherently political nature of public participation, positioning it as a means for marginalized groups to achieve meaningful inclusion and influence in decision-making processes that have historically excluded them. As a result, this definition differs from the above two by recognizing specific beneficiaries of public participation rather than assuming that the public as a whole would benefit.

Another distinction of Arnstein's definition is its perception of government. Governments are not inherently responsive to the needs of all citizens and, instead, are perceived as either supporting or indifferent to the structures perpetuating inequality and exclusion. In the above definitions, participation is a tool used by governments to improve services to constituents. In Arnstein's conception, participation is to reshape the foundations of power within society away from those already in power, including the government. In this perspective, participation is revolutionary; it is an instrument for dismantling systemic barriers and giving marginalized groups agency in shaping their own destinies.

Elsewhere in the paper that defined citizen participation, Arnstein presented an eight-tier typology of participation. The upper-most degrees of citizen power are when disenfranchised citizens wrest control from traditional powerholders. The ability to participate is won through struggle. This typology further underscores the notion that meaningful participation goes beyond tokenistic involvement or superficial engagement—it requires a fundamental transformation in power structures.

Public Participation Concepts

To determine if government board membership should be considered public participation, the first concept to be acknowledged is the act of participation. As mentioned above, this concept pertains to the specific actions and activities through which individuals or groups engage in public decision-making processes. From the state-centric perspective, the act of participation primarily revolves around contributing ideas and expertise to assist governments in formulating and refining policies. The participant-centric perspective expands the notion of participation to a wider array of activities in public life. However, the Societal-centric perspective differs in that participation is the result of capturing power from the traditional powerholders and reshaping societal dynamics to include marginalized groups. Arnstein would likely characterize participation described by the other definitions as tokenism because they do not ensure that the powerful will heed the views of the public.

The second concept to analyze is the purpose of participation. From the state-centric viewpoint, the purpose of participation is closely tied to enhancing government policies through the infusion of external expertise and ideas. In contrast, the participant-centric outlook on the purpose of participation emphasizes a more democratic and inclusive objective. Rather than being limited to technical expertise, participation becomes a means to infuse governance with the rich tapestry of societal viewpoints. Arnstein's societal-centric perspective, however, transforms the purpose of participation into a potent tool for upending existing power dynamics. Participation is not just a means to improve policies or include various viewpoints; it is a vehicle for altering the very foundations of societal power, distribution of resources, and decision-making authority.

The final concept to examine is the role of government in public participation. From the state-centric standpoint and participant-centric perspectives, the government is envisioned as a partner and beneficiary of public participation—a recipient of external expertise that enhances policymaking. Governments help formulate a methodology for collecting information from the public and using that to improve services. However, Arnstein's societal-centric perspective diverges significantly as the government is an adversary and is seen as a central component of the power structure that perpetuates inequality and exclusion. In this perspective, governments are resistant or indifferent to helping marginalized groups in society and will only do so when forced.

Evaluating Voluntary Board Participation from Each Perspective

Returning to the original question of whether government board membership can be considered public participation, that answer depends on the perspective taken. In addition, each perspective may evaluate each type of board differently. In general, the state-centric perspective is likely to consider governmental boards as a form of public participation. They have convened the participation of individuals who contribute ideas, expertise, and recommendations to the government's decision-making processes. However, for the governing board ideal-type in particular, the state-centric may consider

those boards to be part of the government because they have decision-making authority. In that ideal type, the board embodies government decision-making rather than an external contributor. Advisory boards, though, align closely with the state-centric view, as they offer their unique perspectives and insights to assist governmental officials in improving decision-making while not possessing direct decision-making authority.

The participant-centric perspective would view government board membership as a form of participation that involves incorporating a broader range of public concerns, needs, interests, and values into decision-making. This perspective could apply to various types of boards, such as ethics boards, ombuds boards, and appeal boards, which address citizen concerns, uphold ethical standards, and ensure fair treatment in administrative matters. These boards enable participants to influence decisions by bringing their personal experiences, values, and interests into the decision-making process.

From a societal-centric perspective, government board membership might be seen as insufficient to truly represent public participation. While some boards might include members who reflect marginalized communities or previously excluded groups, they are the creations of existing power dynamics. From this perspective's vantage point, who gets appointed may determine if board membership should be considered public participation. If the have-nots of society were able to serve on boards to give voice to under-represented citizens, it would be. Additionally, this perspective would be appreciative of boards that fit the governing board ideal type, and other board types with decision-making abilities, so that governing powers are not in the sole purview of professional administrators and elected officials.

Table 7

Comparison of Three Perspectives on Public Participation

	State-Centric Perspective	Participant-Centric Perspective	Societal-Centric Perspective
Definition	Participation as the contribution of ideas and expertise to government.	Participation as a broad range of activities reflecting people's concerns, needs, interests, and values.	Participation as a tool for redistributing power and enabling societal reform.
Primary Focus	Enhancing government policies through public input.	Incorporating the public's values and experiences in decision-making.	Reshaping power dynamics and achieving meaningful inclusion of marginalized groups.
Role of Public	Contributors of ideas and expertise.	Partners in governance, contributing to all aspects of public decision-making.	Agents of change, challenging and transforming societal power structures.
Role of Government	Beneficiary and decision-maker, using public input to improve policies.	Collaborative partner, integrating public values into governance.	Often an adversary, part of the power structure to be challenged for greater inclusion.
Outcome	Improved government policies through external expertise.	Governance shaped by a diverse range of public viewpoints and experiences.	Societal transformation and increased agency for marginalized groups.

Chapter 5: Hierarchical Taxonomy of Open Government Datasets

As I found with government boards, there was not a classification system that allowed me to compare open government datasets across different public sector domains in how they opened the government. Earlier studies that classified open government datasets examined the subjects of the datasets (Cho, 2023) or the quality of the datasets (Vetrò, et al., 2016). However, I could not identify research examining the open-government-ness of the datasets. An early critique by Yu and Robinson (2012) was that open data produced by a government does not necessarily mean the government has become more open in the traditional meaning of open government. The Yu and Robinson article provided an example of an authoritarian regime producing an open government dataset regarding transit system times. The public can learn how to access the transit system better, but it does not necessarily mean the government has made itself more accountable to the public. Therefore, existing open government data classification systems, such as by subject or quality, do not measure or describe if or how the government has become more open by publishing the dataset. The lack of a classification system limits the ability of social scientists to explain if and how a government has become more open when it publishes an open government dataset.

Data and Methods

Hierarchical taxonomies are classification systems that organize entities or objects into hierarchical categories based on their characteristics or attributes. Although taxonomies are most commonly associated with the biological sciences, where they are used to classify living organisms into groups based on their evolutionary relationships, they are often used in other fields, such as social sciences, to classify non-biological entities such as concepts, behaviors, or artifacts. In a hierarchical taxonomy, categories are arranged in a tree-like structure, with broader categories at the top of the tree and more specific categories at the bottom. Each category is a subset of the category above it, and the categories become more specific as you move down the tree (Bailey, 1993). In this study, I developed a

taxonomy of datasets available in open government data portals operated by four city governments in New York State by examining the data and metadata from each dataset. I sought to answer the research question, *What are the distinct types of open government datasets based on what each line in the dataset represented?*

I analyzed the content of each dataset, paying close attention to the specific information represented in each row. I looked for similarities and patterns across the datasets, such as shared data fields and common themes. Based on my analysis, I began grouping the datasets into broader themes. After developing initial groups, I created more specific categories within each broader theme, representing more specialized topics. Developing the taxonomy was an iterative process and required multiple rounds of data analysis, categorization, and refinement.

Participants

Each of the four cities has a designated open data site where the respective city government shares its government data. In addition to this, the City of Rochester has a separate open data site specifically for its Police Department and the City of Buffalo has a separate open data site operated by the City Comptroller with financial information. Each portal has a homepage with featured datasets, a document outlining the open data policy, and a search function to find specific information. On each, users can navigate to a directory of all datasets and documents available from the city using the portal's main menu. The City of Buffalo operates a site called Open Data Buffalo, while the City of Albany operates OpenAlbany. Both sites utilize the Tyler Technologies Data & Insight Knowledge Base platform, previously known as Socrata, to make their data available. The City of Rochester's open data site, known as DataROC, the Rochester Police Department's site, named RPD Open Data Portal, and the City of Syracuse's site, known as Open Data Syracuse, were created using the ArcGIS Hub platform. Although there are subtle differences between the two platforms, both offer similar functionality and enable governments to publish and present their data in a user-friendly manner.

Although the open data portals often provided additional applications and data, I limited my unit of analysis to data and datasets created and maintained by that city that are available in a freely accessible format. Databases that provided information but did not include the ability for the public to download data, documents, applications that only provided real-time information (e.g., snow plow tracker), data linking to datasets on other governmental websites, or other datasets not representing the work of city employees or officials were not included in the analysis. By employing these stringent criteria, I sought to create a comprehensive and uniform list of open government data across the four cities to analyze.

In the directory of Open Data Buffalo, a total of 2,320 items were initially available. Specific filters were applied to exclude data sourced from other open data websites, namely data.ny.gov and health.data.ny.gov. Furthermore, only datasets and documents were considered for analysis, leading to a substantial reduction in the number of available datasets and documents to 96, consisting of 91 datasets and five documents. Following the data cleaning procedures described in the Data Collection Methods section below, I successfully identified a final selection of 49 distinct datasets.

In the DataROC directory, a total of 225 items were initially present, including 55 datasets, 110 Apps & Maps, and 55 documents. Unlike Open Data Buffalo, datasets from other directories were not listed in the DataROC Directory. After analyzing the datasets and performing data cleaning procedures, I identified a total of twelve active datasets eligible for inclusion in this study. The RPD Open Data Portal listed 27 datasets in its directory, of which ten met the study's criteria after the data cleaning process.

In the Open Data Syracuse portal, an initial count of 113 items was recorded, comprising 98 datasets and two documents. However, only 29 datasets were considered eligible for this study. OpenAlbany's directory listed 53 items, all datasets. Nevertheless, upon data review, only seven datasets were found to be eligible for the study.

Data Collection Methods

I identified the open data portals for the four cities. I navigated to a directory of the datasets available in the portal, and used the filtering options in the directory to remove any categories that would not contain any datasets being examined in this study. Each portal had multiple directory webpages due to the restrictions on the number of datasets per page (e.g., ten results per page) and the overall quantity of government-provided data available. Each directory included the name of the dataset, a description of the dataset, the type of data, the date the city last updated the dataset, and the total number of views of the dataset. In addition, three of the five directories also had broad categorizations of each dataset in its portal, such as "Public Safety" or "Infrastructure."

The dataset name is also a hyperlink to a webpage for the dataset. Although there are idiosyncrasies for each open data platform and in each dataset, the data is displayed in a tabular form on the webpage and is available for download. Often, the page provided a description for each column header in the table, with each row representing individual records. When the data incorporated geographical information, the webpage usually displayed a map with the data showcased as an overlay layer. Nevertheless, users can still download the data in its raw format, typically as a Comma-Separated Values (CSV) file or in a similar format suitable for data manipulation and analysis.

Using the ParseHub desktop application, from the directories, I extracted the names of all datasets, a description of all datasets, the city's categorization of all datasets, and the date of the last time the city updated the dataset for Open Data Buffalo, RPD Open Data Portal, Open Data Syracuse, and OpenAlbany. ParseHub is a web scraping tool designed for automated data extraction from websites and exporting the scraped data into a Comma-Separated Values (CSV) file. Once I scraped the open data directories, I downloaded a CSV file from ParseHub containing the extracted data. I opened the data CSV files in Microsoft Excel and combined the data in each into a single Excel file. Each row represented one dataset, and I added a column for the open data portal that hosts the dataset.

I encountered a limitation when extracting the dataset information from the DataROC directory using ParseHub. The website's page layout did not allow for automated data extraction using the tool. As a result, I had to resort to manual methods to gather the necessary dataset information. To manually obtain the dataset information from DataROC, I navigated through the directory and accessed the individual datasets one by one. For each dataset, I copied the dataset name, description, and the date of the last update and pasted that information into the spreadsheet. DataROC did not provide a categorization option. Although this process was more time-consuming than automated web scraping and more likely to result in an error, it ensured that the dataset information from DataROC was included in the analysis.

I then began the data cleaning process by removing datasets that did not fit the definition of open government data. First, I excluded datasets containing only information from the United States Census. Since regurgitated census data would not represent transparency by the city, I removed those datasets. Additionally, I filtered out datasets consisting solely of Geographic Information System (GIS) layers available to the general public in commercial products (e.g., Google Maps). Cities frequently used Census mapping files and the seemingly extraneous GIS layers as reference files in presentations for other open government datasets. Lastly, I removed datasets that were severely out of date. I defined severely out-of-date as not being updated in more than one year for datasets that should be updated more frequently than annually or two years for datasets that should be updated at least annually. I included any data the city had not recently updated but changed so infrequently that one could expect the data to be accurate even after not being updated for two years or more (e.g., policing districts).

I continued the data-cleaning process by examining the datasets. Several datasets reported on the same topic, with the only distinction between the multiple datasets being the years the information represented. I carefully reviewed each dataset that appeared to be similar, and if I found them nearly identical, I grouped these datasets together and counted them as one in my analysis. This step ensured

an accurate analysis of the data, eliminating any potential duplication or distortions that might have compromised the research findings. Table 8 on page 99 lists the datasets included in this study.

Data Analysis

I utilized a pragmatic reduction approach to develop a taxonomy that would allow me to compare datasets between service delivery areas. Pragmatic reduction involves streamlining a taxonomy by eliminating non-essential categories that do not serve the intended purpose. It condenses complex information into a manageable and meaningful framework that can be easily applied and understood. The pragmatic reduction approach process begins with identifying all possible categories that may be used, and then removing redundant, overlapping, or irrelevant categories until a focused and relevant taxonomy emerges (Bailey, 1993).

To begin the data analysis, I compiled all the information I collected about each dataset (i.e., names, descriptions, and city-created categorizations) into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, with each row representing a dataset. I reviewed the content of each dataset to identify common themes, recurring topics, and potential similarities between datasets. I created a new column for each potential theme within the spreadsheet, assigning a value for the theme in each row within that column. After I exhausted potential themes, I examined each to determine which themes were redundant, overlapping, or irrelevant. Through this process of pragmatic reduction, I aimed to develop a streamlined taxonomy while preserving the essential categories that would allow me to compare datasets across service delivery areas.

To develop the top-level theme of the hierarchical taxonomy, I first examined the datasets I grouped together based on my initial themes. I then began to condense the groupings by combining similar ones under a more generic theme. I then identified datasets that were intuitively different from other datasets within the group. In an iterative process, I contemplated the cause of the discordance and adjusted the theme until, in my subjective opinion, similar datasets were grouped together. The

iterative analysis, categorization, and refinement process continued until I was confident that the theme represented a coherent and comprehensive classification of open government datasets.

With the top-level theme established, I created derivative themes for each dataset. The goal was to categorize the datasets into more specific topics further while ensuring they remained related to the broader theme. This process involved examining the content of each dataset, looking for patterns, similarities, and differences that could be used to create subcategories. I continued the iterative process of analysis, categorization, and refinement I used when developing the top-level themes for these second-level themes until I had created a comprehensive hierarchical taxonomy that represented distinct types of open government datasets. This hierarchical structure allowed for a clear and organized representation of the datasets, with broader themes at the top and more specific categories down the tree.

Results

Analysis of Descriptions and Meta-Data

When analyzing the open government datasets, I initially separated the datasets into three different categories: Governmental Actions, Governmental Finances, and Collected Data. The difference between the three categories was based on the nature of the data and its relevance to the functioning of the government and the community at large. The Governmental Actions category encompassed datasets that primarily focused on capturing the activities, decisions, and policies undertaken by the government. The Governmental Finances category consisted of datasets that specifically dealt with the financial aspects of the government. The Collected Data category captured datasets that did not fall within the previous two categories and consisted of information the government collected and stored.

Many datasets included information I could have applied to multiple categories. However, I faithfully categorized datasets based on what each row represented and did not make any inferences.

Therefore, although a dataset may have included information encompassing multiple categories, I placed each dataset into a single category based on the purpose of the dataset.

Governmental Actions. I categorized 46 of the 107 open government datasets into the Governmental Actions category. I then began to divide the 46 datasets into two subcategories based on the government's action: providing a public good or using its governmental power. I categorized datasets concerning the provision of a public good as Public Service Data and exercising governmental power as Governance Data. I identified nine datasets meeting the criteria for Public Service Data and 37 for Governance Data.

The most common type of Public Service Data was reporting on 311 requests. 311 is a non-emergency number that people can call to report issues to their local government, such as potholes, graffiti, and abandoned vehicles. Three cities provided a dataset where each row represented a 311 call. The three other datasets had to deal with calls for service from the Police Department, building inspections, fire protection, and the daily results of lake water testing.

I then explored the 37 datasets in which each row in the dataset represented a governmental action where the government exercised the power of the state. Nine datasets represented the governments using their Police and Public Safety powers (i.e., actions that maintain law and order.) Nine represented the governments using their Code Enforcement powers (i.e., enforcement of building codes and other regulations to ensure the safety and quality of structures and properties.) Seven represented the government using its Building Licensing and Regulation powers (i.e., issuing licenses and permits to businesses operating within their jurisdiction.) Six represented the governments using their Land Use and Zoning powers (i.e., regulating land use through zoning ordinances and planning regulations.) Six represented the governments using their Taxation and Finance Powers (i.e., levy taxes and fees to fund public services.)

Collected Data. I categorized 57 datasets of the 107 total as Collected Data. I then subcategorized these datasets into two subcategories based on what the data described: (1) the government and its operation or (2) citizen actions and community assets. I subcategorized Collected Data about the government and its operations as Institutional Data. I then categorized data about citizens and infrastructure as Community Data. I identified 34 datasets that met the criteria for Institutional Data and 23 as Community Data.

I found that Geospatial Territories (i.e., geographic boundaries and other spatial information used for planning and service delivery) were the most common type of Institutional Data, with 15 found. I then classified nine datasets into a Governmental Assets (i.e., tangible objects that have value) subcategory and seven into Operational Data (i.e., information about the organization's day-to-day operations.) Finally, I classified the remaining two datasets into an Employee Data category.

I then turned my focus to the 18 Community Data datasets. I classified ten as Citizen Actions, which were comprised of information related to actions and activities carried out by citizens in the community. I classified the remaining thirteen as Community Assets, which included data about properties and infrastructure within the community.

Financial Data. I identified four datasets that entirely contained financial information and analyzed their contents. The way this type of data is structured is different, and the methodology I used for other types of datasets needed to be revised. I classified the information about spending and revenue plans with the Governance Data subcategory I created for Governmental Actions. I did so because these plans represented public officials' decisions to tax the public and spend those funds.

I then turned my attention to datasets that covered individual transactions. I classified these datasets as Institutional Data because they provided insights into the government's financial operations and expenditures on a granular level. These datasets contained detailed records of financial transactions, such as payments to vendors and salaries of government employees.

The flowchart in Figure 3 is a visual representation of how I categorized each dataset. The hierarchical taxonomy is represented as a decision tree, where each branch point poses a question that splits the path based on the nature of the data under consideration. The datasets were split into three categories initially (Government Decisions and Actions, Financial Information, and Government Collected Data) and then four after a subsequent round of categorization (Public Service Data, Governance Data, Institutional Data, and Collected Data).

Open Government Dataset Category Descriptions

Public Service Data: This category refers to datasets that capture services performed by public employees when providing public goods. It includes information about various services, activities, and operations carried out by government agencies or departments.

Governance Data: This category refers to datasets that show the exercising of governmental powers and authorities. This category encompasses information about decisions and actions by public officers to govern and administer public affairs.

Institutional Data: This category refers to datasets that provide information about the city government's internal functioning and operations. It includes data related to financial transactions, procurement, personnel management, human resources, organizational structures, and other administrative aspects within government entities.

Collected Data: This category refers to datasets accumulated and maintained by the city government, encompassing information about the citizens, physical environment, infrastructure, or natural resources within its jurisdiction. This type of data does not directly reflect any specific action or operation of the government, but when the government merely serves as a repository of valuable information for various purposes.

Descriptive Data

As shown in Figure 4 on page 106, governance Data was the type most likely to be provided within the open government portals in this study (36 percent). Police and Public Safety data (e.g., homicide arrests) and code enforcement (e.g., code violations) were the two most common types of Governance Data to be provided, constituting eight percent. Taxation and Finance (e.g., assessment roll) and Business Licensing and Regulation (e.g., business licenses) were the next two most common types of datasets to be listed, both constituting seven percent. The final types of datasets concerned Land Use and Zoning (e.g., designated historic properties), which constituted six percent.

Institutional Data was the type next most likely to be provided within the open government portals in this study (34 percent). Geospatial Territorial data, such as maps of city council districts or planning neighborhoods, was the most common type of Institutional Data to be listed, constituting 14 percent. Operations (e.g., pavement ratings of city streets) data was the next most likely listed, constituting seven percent. Government Asset (e.g., police cameras) data was the other type of Institutional Data, constituting eight percent of the total datasets.

Community Data was the type next most likely to be provided within the open government portals within the study (21 percent). Community Assets (e.g., tree inventory) was the other subcategory of Community Data, constituting 12 percent. The remaining datasets in this category were Citizen Action data, such as reported crimes or traffic incidents, constituting nine percent.

Public Service Data was the least likely to be provided within the open government portals within the study (eight percent). Due to the low number of total categories, I was unable to create any subcategories.

Discussion

What Does Each Category Signify?

Open government practices have historically been enacted to make government more accountable. The federal government passed the Freedom of Information Act mainly due to concerns about career government officials not sharing information with Congress or the press (Wald, 1984). The American Society of Newspaper Editors advocated for open meeting laws to ensure that governmental decisions were made in public settings where citizens and journalists could attend, observe, and report on the proceedings (Open meeting statutes: The press fights for the 'right to know', 1962). The theoretical underpinning for open government practices generally stems from democratic theories highlighting the importance of citizen participation, public scrutiny, and accountability. Open government data should be examined if it results in the same type of enhanced accountability as freedom of information and open meeting statutes.

Yu and Robinson (2012) expressed concern that when people refer to open government data, which merges the concept of open government with the concept of open data, it is unclear if open is an adjective for data or for government. They proposed a two-dimensional framework for describing the openness of open government data, one technological and one that describes the actual or intended benefits of the data disclosure. For the technological dimension, they categorize the data as being on a spectrum between adaptable and inert, depending on how simple or challenging it is for citizens to come up with new uses for the data. The second dimension describes the benefits of the data disclosure, either actual or expected, with the goals of disclosure running on a spectrum between service delivery and public accountability. The authors define data that meets the criteria for being open in both a data and governmental sense as being accessible and politically sensitive.

Since this paper is looking only at open government data, all the data I have considered has met the criteria of being accessible. For anyone trying to measure how open an open government dataset is

in the open government sense of the term, one would need to measure that data's political sensitivity. However, determining if a dataset is politically sensitive is an unanswerable philosophic question. Since it is rooted in interpretations rooted in political context and normative theories of governance, assessing political sensitivity is inherently subjective. This subjectivity introduces methodological challenges for researchers attempting to quantify the degree of openness in government data sets. Therefore, I will describe how each category created in the above section contributes to accountability.

Accountability can be defined as "a social relationship in which an actor feels an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct to some significant other" (Bovens, 2014, p. 184). In the realm of public accountability, the government is obliged to explain and justify its conduct to its citizens. Public accountability has several distinct yet interrelated functions: democratic control, enhancing the integrity of public governance, improving performance, maintaining or enhancing legitimacy, and serving a ritual or purifying function in exceptional cases.

- Democratic control: At the crux of democratic governance is the principal-agent relationship, where the principals (citizens) transfer their sovereignty to agents (government officials) for the execution of public policies and other governance tasks. Public accountability in this realm refers to the system of checks and balances that citizens can use to ensure their government is acting appropriately.
- Integrity of governance: Public accountability acts as a mechanism that deters public officials from misusing power or engaging in other malfeasances.
- Improvement of Performance: Public accountability compels officials to adhere to performance standards and potentially adjust these standards in response to changing circumstances or public needs.

- **Legitimacy of Public Governance:** A combination of the above three functions, public accountability maintains or enhances the government's legitimacy by bridging the chasm between the governed and the government.
- **Ritual or Purifying Function:** Public accountability processes can provide a form of collective catharsis at times of tragedies, fiascos, and failures. Such processes facilitate public acknowledgment of mistakes and provide mechanisms for redress.

To offer a more nuanced understanding of the implications of open government dataset categories on public accountability, this paper will identify which function of public account each category is most closely related. However, each category can, to a lesser extent, be linked to other public accountability functions.

Public Service Data. Data in this category primarily influences public accountability through the improvement of performance function. For instance, datasets such as fire incidents the fire department responded to, or complaints received by 311 service requests provide insights into the amount of work performed and the effectiveness of the services rendered. The availability of this data allows for quantifiable metrics that can be used to assess the performance of governmental agencies.

Governance Data. Data in this category primarily influences public accountability through the democratic control function. For instance, citizens can investigate if the city assessed properties appropriately or if there is a substantial amount of use of force by the police department. The availability of this data allows the public to judge if the government is acting fairly and justly, and, ultimately, use this information to aid their judgment in an election.

Institutional Data. Data in this category primarily influences public accountability through the integrity of government function. For instance, information about officers in the police force, spending the city has done, or the location of various city assets may deter malfeasance by city officials. The

availability of this data provides the public with information that can be used to identify patterns of abuse and mismanagement.

Collected Data. Data in this category is largely unrelated to any specific public accountability function but may serve an auxiliary role in other functions. For instance, data about sex offenders or traffic incidences may not directly indicate government performance or integrity but could be used in combination with other types of data to inform broader analyses.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This analysis attempts to classify datasets provided in open government data portals to allow scholars to compare datasets across different public sector domains in how they opened the government. This absence of such a classification system was a gap in the literature that limited research in open government data. This new classification system provides an opportunity for other researchers to develop new insights by comparing datasets that governments publish. However, because of the limited geographical scope and level of government I used, the classification system may not fully capture the diversity of datasets available in other regions or at different levels of government. Therefore, this limitation suggests caution when generalizing the findings to other contexts. Replication studies are needed. These studies should apply the classification system to different datasets from governments from geographical locations and at different levels in the federal system to test its robustness and applicability.

I found that many datasets in the portals do not fit the criteria of open government data, such as census data created by the federal government. In addition, I found many datasets to be out-of-date. To address these issues, I implemented a stringent data-cleaning process. However, I may have excluded potentially informative datasets. Further, the removal of extraneous datasets, such as maps of streets, may reveal an inherent bias in my approach, focusing only on datasets that I deemed useful or relevant.

Future studies should re-evaluate the selection criteria for datasets, potentially employing a more nuanced approach that can capture the diverse range of open government data.

The iterative and interpretive nature of developing a taxonomy brings subjectivity, especially in grouping and regrouping datasets into themes and categories. Because the data in each dataset could provide information related to multiple groups, conducting a grouping takes a high degree of understanding of city government functions and may be subjective. Furthermore, the use of pragmatic reduction may lead to the elimination of categories that could have nuanced implications. Given the inherent subjectivity in the development of a taxonomy, future research can examine the perspectives of different types of stakeholders to determine this taxonomy's utility.

A final limitation of this study is that although I specifically developed a taxonomy to facilitate comparison across service delivery areas, it does not directly measure the impact of these datasets on the level of governmental openness. Future research should aim to link the taxonomy with metrics or indicators that can assess the level of openness and accountability in government actions. As an example, a future study could examine if providing the assessment roll in an open government portal resulted in more property owners challenging their assessments.

Table 8

Open Government Datasets

Dataset	Parent Category	Child Category	Sub-Child Category
Albany			
Police Department Arrests	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety
Police Department Calls for Service	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Police Department Citizen Complaints	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Operational Data
Police Department Use of Force Incident	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety
Police Department Patrol Zones	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Police Department Reported Crimes	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Police Department Traffic Citations	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety
Buffalo			
311 Service Requests	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Annual Average Daily Traffic Volume Counts	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Assessment Roll	Government Actions	Governance Data	Taxation and Finance
Bike Lanes	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Business Licenses	Government Actions	Governance Data	Business Licensing and Regulation
Checkbook	Financial Information	Institutional Data	Operational Data
City Website Analytics	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Operational Data
Code Violations	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement

Dataset	Parent Category	Child Category	Sub-Child Category
Commercial Valuation Districts	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Council Districts	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Crime Incidents	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Fire Hydrants	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets
General Inspections	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Historic Districts	Government Actions	Governance Data	Land Use and Zoning
Historic Landmarks	Government Actions	Governance Data	Land Use and Zoning
Housing Court Cases	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement
In Rem 44 - 52 Auction Results	Government Actions	Governance Data	Taxation and Finance
Licensed Contractors	Government Actions	Governance Data	Business Licensing and Regulation
Multiple Dwelling Certificates of Occupancy (COOs)	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement
Operating Budget	Financial Information	Governance Data	Taxation and Finance
Parking Meters	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets
Parking Summonses	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety
Payroll	Financial Information	Institutional Data	Employee Data
Permits	Government Actions	Governance Data	Business Licensing and Regulation
Planned Unit Development	Government Actions	Governance Data	Land Use and Zoning
Planning Neighborhoods	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Planning, Zoning, and Historic Preservation Approvals	Government Actions	Governance Data	Land Use and Zoning
Police Cameras	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets

Dataset	Parent Category	Child Category	Sub-Child Category
Police Districts	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Police Sectors	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Public Art Inventory	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets
Quality of Life Summonses	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety
Recyclable Materials	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Operational Data
Recycle Runs	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Recycling and Waste Collection Statistics	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Rental Registry	Government Actions	Governance Data	Business Licensing and Regulation
Revenue Budget	Financial Information	Governance Data	Taxation and Finance
Right of Way	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Snow Emergency Parking	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Operational Data
Tax Districts	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Tax Roll	Government Actions	Governance Data	Taxation and Finance
Tows	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Traffic Incident	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Traffic Stop Receipts	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety
Tree Inventory	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
True Tax	Government Actions	Governance Data	Taxation and Finance
Uniform Traffic Tickets	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety
Vendors	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Operational Data

Dataset	Parent Category	Child Category	Sub-Child Category
Zoning Map	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Rochester			
311 Case Data	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Building Footprints	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Business Permits	Government Actions	Governance Data	Business Licensing and Regulation
Certificate of Occupancy	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement
City Council Districts	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
City Owned Parcels	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets
Code Enforcement	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement
Crimes	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Demolitions	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement
Homicide Arrests	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety
Homicide Victims	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Patrol Beats	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Police Cameras	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets
Police Districts	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Police Personnel	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Employee Data
Sex Offenders	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Shooting Victims	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Sworn Pay	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Employee Data

Dataset	Parent Category	Child Category	Sub-Child Category
Tax Parcels	Government Actions	Governance Data	Taxation and Finance
Trees	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Water Hydrants	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets
Zoning, Preservation, and Overlay Districts	Government Actions	Governance Data	Land Use and Zoning
Syracuse			
Air Temperature	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Assessment Roll	Government Actions	Governance Data	Taxation and Finance
Athletic Courts	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Bike Community Assets	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Building Permits	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement
Code Violations	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement
Common Council Map	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Crime Data	Collected Data	Community Data	Citizen Actions
Emergency Snow Routes	Collected Data	Institutional Data	
Fire Hydrants	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets
Fire Incidents	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Historical Properties	Government Actions	Governance Data	Land Use and Zoning
Lake Water Testing	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Parcel Map	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Parking Violations	Government Actions	Governance Data	Police and Public Safety

Dataset	Parent Category	Child Category	Sub-Child Category
Pavement Ratings	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Operational Data
Permits	Government Actions	Governance Data	Business Licensing and Regulation
Potholes Filled	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Public Art	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Government Assets
Rental Registry	Government Actions	Governance Data	Business Licensing and Regulation
Road Temperatures	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Sidewalk Inventory	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Syracuse Planning Neighborhoods	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
Syracuse Trash Day Pickup Day by Route	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Geospatial Territories
SYRCityline Requests	Government Actions	Public Service Data	
Tree Inventory	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets
Unfit Properties	Government Actions	Governance Data	Code Enforcement
Water Main Breaks	Collected Data	Institutional Data	Operational Data
Water Service Lines	Collected Data	Community Data	Community Assets

Figure 3

Categorization of Open Government Datasets

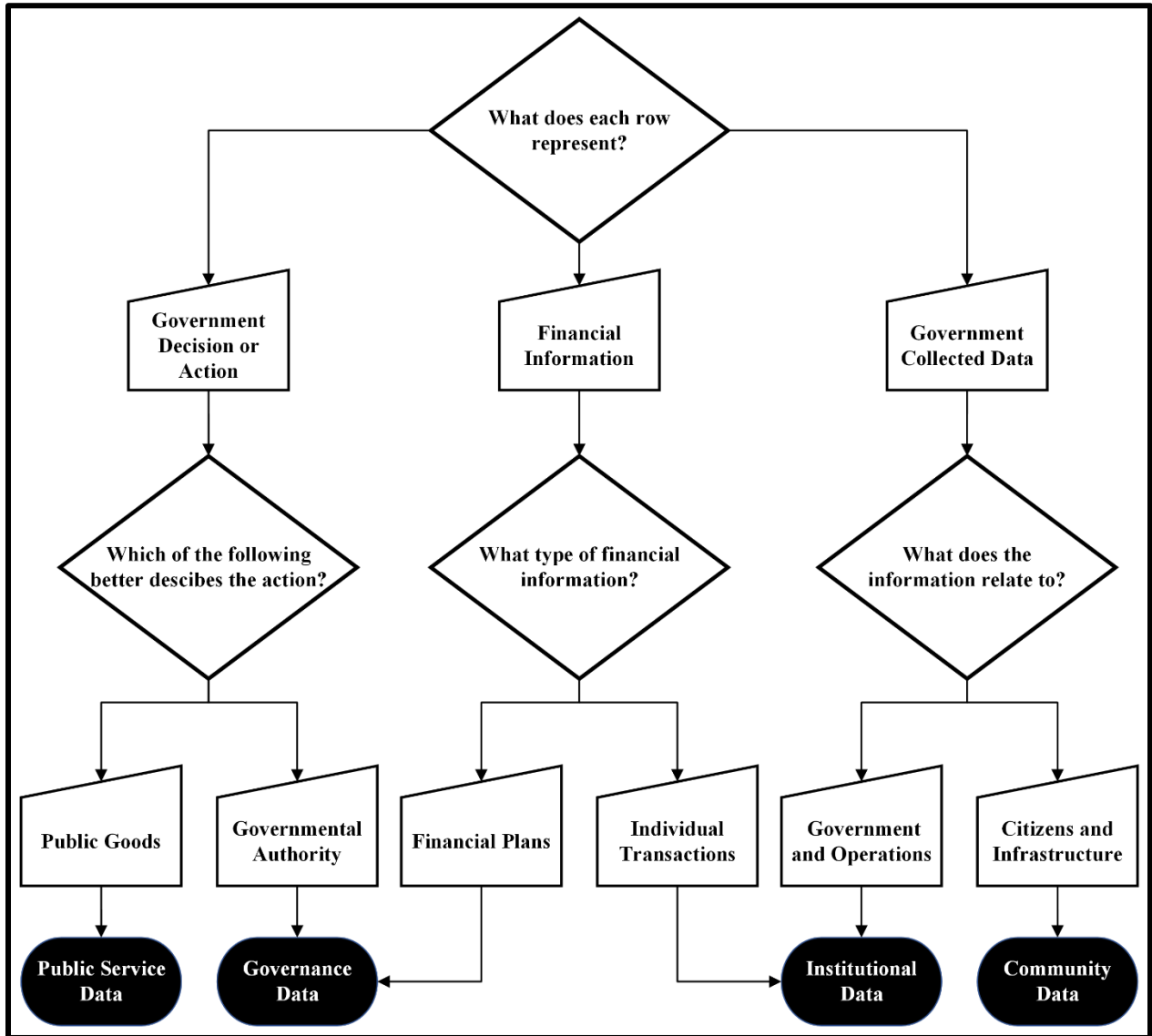
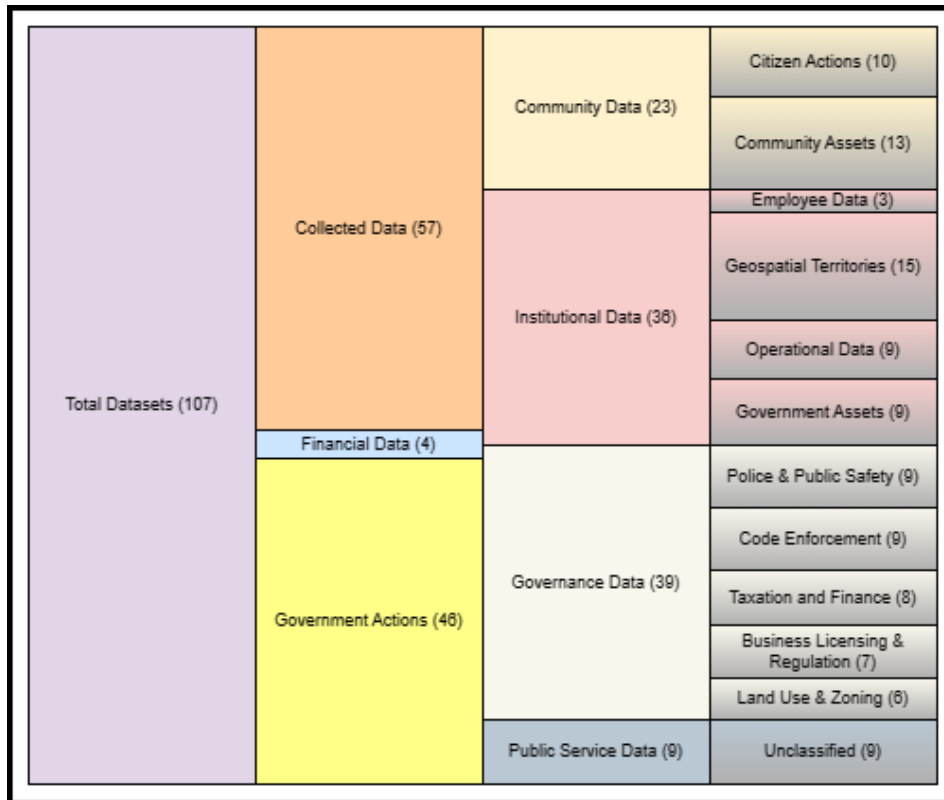


Figure 4

Descriptive Data of Open Government Datasets



Chapter 6: Descriptive Analysis of Open Government Practices

After I developed a methodology for categorizing government boards and open government datasets independent of the public sector domain, I returned my attention to describing the open government practices utilized in the four cities. The previous steps of creating categorization systems were necessary because the field lacked adequate conceptualizations that allowed me to describe and compare open government practices. After these concepts were firmly established, understanding the differences and similarities among the four cities in this study became more manageable.

Data and Methods

The Research Questions

The two research questions I tried to answer are:

- (1) How do city governments use government boards and open government data?; and
- (2) How are various open government tools related to one another?

Research Question 1. This study examines two of the most frequently used forms of open government tools: using boards in the policy process and publishing open government data. Most research that examines open government is lacking because existing methodologies used to measure open government focus on a specific strategy rather than considering multiple ways governments can become open. This gap has left the field with an imperfect understanding of open government. This study will examine where and how frequently governments use these open government practices. This research differs from nearly all previous studies on the subject because it scrutinizes multiple open government tools.

Research Question 2. This research can identify possible relationships between tools by scrutinizing multiple open government tools simultaneously. The existing literature on open government practices often treats each tool in isolation, failing to capture potential interdependencies or synergies that might exist among different approaches. This study recognizes that city governments do not

typically adopt open government practices in a vacuum; rather, these practices may coexist and influence each other in complex ways. This study focuses on two tools representative of transparency and public participation: open government data and governmental boards.

Research Methodology

I used a qualitative design to answer the above research questions in this paper. I ruled out a quantitative design because the breadth of data I would need to collect to find statistically significant results is beyond the scope of this study. Creswell (2014) classifies qualitative research studies as one of the following: (a) narrative research, (b) phenomenological research, (c) grounded theory, (d) ethnography, or (e) case study. A case study is the correct qualitative methodology in this paper since other methods are insufficient. Narrative methods primarily tell life stories, which would not work to study open government. Phenomenological methods are subjective experiences and would not work since this study is concerned with an objective measurement. The topic is too advanced for grounded theory since already recognized and understood practices are considered open government. Finally, ethnography is not appropriate because it is an anthropological methodology concerned with people and cultures, which is unrelated to open government.

Yin (2018) cites three pre-conditions when a researcher would choose to use a case study design. The first pre-condition is that the primary research questions ask *how* and *why* questions. The central research questions in this study, as shown above, meet the first pre-condition. The second pre-condition is that I have little-to-no control over behavioral events. Thus, no researcher could practically conduct a controlled experiment to study open government. The final pre-condition is that the focus of the study is contemporary. This study meets the contemporary pre-condition since the city governments studied in this research and the initiatives implemented that facilitate open government are ongoing and current.

I used a multi-case, embedded case study methodology to describe how cities implemented open government practices and examine how these practices compared between governmental functions. A multi-case, embedded case study design is a research methodology commonly used in qualitative research to study complex phenomena within their real-life context. This design involves selecting multiple cases that share some common characteristics or features and then embedding smaller units of analysis ("sub-cases") within each case to better understand the phenomenon under investigation. This methodology is frequently used when the focus of the case study is a single topic but requires collecting and analyzing data from multiple units encapsulated within that subject. This approach allows social scientists to explore how different aspects of the larger phenomenon manifest within each case and the embedded unit of analysis (Yin, 2018).

Cases and Sub-Cases

In case study research, researchers conduct comprehensive analyses of specific instances. I constrain these instances by both time and activities, and multiple techniques for gathering data are employed (Creswell, 2014). Yin defines a *case study* as an empirical approach that thoroughly examines a contemporary phenomenon ("case") within its real-world setting, particularly when the distinction between the phenomenon and its context is apparent. Case studies address situations with a high ratio of variables to data points, benefiting from pre-established theoretical propositions for guiding design, data collection, and analysis. They also rely on multiple converging sources of evidence for triangulation.

City governments were the primary unit of analysis in this study. My rationale for choosing cities as the focal point of investigation is that city governments operate as a single entity while encompassing many interconnected agencies that provide governmental services. Although the agencies administering these functions operate independently, they are all under the purview of the same elected leadership and operate in the same geographical area. I, however, treated these agencies as the secondary unit of analysis of the study.

Cases. I selected the cases investigated in this study using replication logic. Replication logic involves selecting cases that are not identical but share certain common characteristics. These commonalities allow me to compare and contrast the effects of open government practices across cases, while the variations provide insights into how context-specific factors impact these practices (Yin, 2018). I selected four mid-sized cities in New York State as the cases studied: Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany. I decided to focus my study in New York State due to convenience. However, I decided not to include New York Cities or any municipalities that is in the same media market as it because of the unique nature of New York City compared to other cities.

Geographical Context. All four cities are located in New York State and outside the New York City media market. Buffalo is in western New York, on the eastern shores of Lake Erie and at the head of the Niagara River. Seventy miles to Buffalo's east, on the southern shore of Lake Ontario is Rochester. Ninety miles to the east of Rochester, in central New York, is Syracuse. One hundred forty miles to the east of Syracuse, on the banks of the Hudson River, is Albany.

Demographic Context: Buffalo, with 278,349 residents as of the 2020 census, has the largest population of the four cities. The racial composition of Buffalo is 39 percent non-Hispanic whites, 37 percent African Americans, and 24 percent other. The foreign-born population comprises 10.6 percent of the city, and 13.3 percent are 65 and older. The median income in the city is \$40,669, and the poverty rate is 26.4 percent. The employment rate is 54 percent, and 33 percent have a bachelor's degree or higher (United States Census Bureau, 2023).

Rochester has 211,328 residents and is the second most populous of the four cities. The racial composition of Rochester is 38 percent African American, 33 percent non-Hispanic white, and 29 percent other. The foreign-born population makes up 9.1 percent of the city, and 14.1 percent are 65 and older. The median income is \$41,980, and the poverty rate is 27.8 percent. The employment rate is

55 percent, and 28 percent of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher (United States Census Bureau, 2023).

Syracuse is the third most populous of the four cities, with 148,620 residents. Non-Hispanic whites comprise 46 percent of the population, African Americans comprise 29 percent, and other races comprise 25 percent. The foreign-born population comprises 10.7 percent of the city, and 15.6 percent are 65 and older. The median income is \$40,076, and the poverty rate is 28.7 percent. The employment rate is 50 percent, and 31 percent of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher (United States Census Bureau, 2023).

Albany is the least populated of the four cities, with 99,224 residents. The racial composition of Albany is 45 percent white, 29 percent African American, and 26 percent other. The foreign-born population comprises 10.7 percent of the city, and 15 percent are 65 and older. The median income is \$49,763, and the poverty rate is 22 percent. The employment rate is 56 percent, and 42 percent of the population has a bachelor's degree or higher (United States Census Bureau, 2023).

Budgetary Context. In their 2022-23 budget, Buffalo had 3,173 employees. Its three largest Departments in terms of expenditures are Police (\$90,567,780), Fire (\$70,985,100), and Public Works (\$35,973,708). The other Departments are the Executive Department (\$7,963,589), Department of Law (\$4,906,497), Department of Assessment and Taxation (\$3,719,630), Department of Management Information Systems (\$7,113,901), Department of Administration, Finance, Policy, and Urban Affairs (\$4,419,489), Department of Parking (\$3,816,679), Department of Human Resources (\$5,854,238), Department of Community Services and Recreational Programming (\$5,278,938), Department of Permits and Inspection Services (\$5,953,710), and Water Department (\$8,786,312).

In Rochester's 2022-23 budget, they budgeted for 2,868 employees. Its three largest Departments in terms of budget are Environmental Services (\$107,541,200), Police (\$90,978,600), and Fire (\$54,943,100). The other Departments are the Administration Department (\$12,109,600),

Information Technology Department (\$9,052,600), Finance Department (\$11,703,100), Department of Neighborhood & Business Development (\$25,536,300), Emergency Communications Department (\$16,000,600), Public Library (\$12,998,600), and Department of Recreation and Human Services (\$21,528,600).

Syracuse's 2022-23 budget included 1,751 employees. The three largest Departments in terms of budget are the Police Department (\$55,867,350), the Fire Department (\$42,260,108), and the Public Works Department (\$39,408,749). The other Departments are the Executive Department (\$7,837,494), Finance Department (\$3,487,217), Audit (\$622,950), Department of Assessment (\$790,534), Law Department (\$4,214,461), Neighborhood and Business Development (\$5,500,785), Engineering (\$1,481,263), and Parks, Recreation and Youth Programming (\$9,757,614).

Albany's 2023 budget included 1,320 employees. Its three largest Departments in terms of budget are the Police Department (\$65,229,650), Fire and Emergency Services (\$39,607,432), and Water and Sater Supply (\$38,250,472). The other Departments are Administrative Services (\$14,464,975), General Services (\$30,399,575), Recreation (\$5,140,876), Department of Neighborhood and Community Services (\$11,147,753), Law Department (\$1,780,728), Assessment and Taxation (\$901,561), and Youth and Workforce Services (\$2,751,450).

Sub-Cases. I used a list of governmental functions from the book *Managing Local Government Services*, published by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) (Stenberg & Lipman Austin, 2007), as the secondary unit of analysis. The book provides an overview of governmental functions provided at the local level. The book's editors describe it as "...ICMA's only text on the complete spectrum of services that the local government manager must make sure are provided (p. ix)." I then identified several government activities that the International City/County Management Association did not include within its text.

Services Identified by the International City/County Management Association. The list of services is clerk functions; budgeting and financial management; human resource management planning; economic development; community development and affordable housing; public works; public parks and recreation; health and human services; emergency management; police services; and fire and other emergency services.

Clerk. The core clerical responsibilities of a municipality involve maintaining and organizing official records, encompassing a spectrum of documents ranging from vital statistics to financial records. Additional clerical responsibilities also include recording and disseminating council or board minutes, ordinances, and resolutions, thus making decisions and legislative actions accessible to the public. Another critical clerical duty involves the issuance of licenses and permits (Dolan, 2007).

In the four cities in this study, a majority vote of the city council appoints the city clerk. The clerk maintains the city's official records, including ordinances, resolutions, and minutes of meetings. As a part of his or her role as the clerk, he or she is designated the local registrar of vital statistics and, therefore, maintains registers of births, marriages, and deaths. Differing from the ICMA text, departments in these cities issued non-discretionary business licenses and permits. However, an exception to this is that the city clerk issues licenses and permits that the city council approves.

Budgeting and financial management. A city's budgeting and financial management responsibilities can be broken up into four stages that exist on a temporal continuum encompassing the budget cycle: preparation, approval, implementation, and audit and review. The preparation stage encompasses the estimation of future revenues and expenditures, as well as appraising capital projects. In the subsequent budget approval stage, the financial manager compiles and submits the budget to the City Council for their amendments and eventual approval. In the implementation state, the city administers the budget. This stage includes accounting, purchasing, treasury, debt, and risk

management. In the final audit and review stage, the city reviews and reports its actual revenue and expenditures and audits its books (Swain, 2007).

Budgeting and financial management functions were spread across multiple departments and offices in the four cities. In Buffalo, the Commissioner of Administration, Finance, Policy, and Urban Affairs is the city's budget director, responsible for preparing the budget with the Mayor. In addition to the Department of Administration, Finance, Policy, and Urban Affairs, the Department of Assessment and Taxation and the Department of Parking also play important roles in administering the budget during the year. The Department of Assessment and Taxation is responsible for valuing property within the city, which forms the basis for property tax collection. The Department of Parking oversees parking meters and ticketing for (and revenue from) unlawful parking. Buffalo also has an independently elected City Comptroller who oversees divisions that perform cash and debt management, accounting, and auditing functions.

In Rochester, the Office of Budget and Management, part of the city's administration, is responsible for overseeing the preparation of the budget and playing a crucial role in its implementation. In addition, it has a Department of Finance that performs other functions in the budget's implementation and audit and review functions, such as accounting, assessment, parking and traffic violations, and purchasing. Rochester is unique among the four cities because it does not have a separately elected official responsible for other budget and financial management functions.

Syracuse, like Rochester, has its budget preparation function separated from the rest of the financial management department; this function is primarily performed in an Office of Management and Budget, located in the Executive Department. The city has a Department of Finance and a Department of Assessment, who play roles in implementing the budget. Additionally, the Division of Purchase is located with the Office of Budget and Management in the Executive Department. The city also has a separately elected City Auditor who serves an audit and review function.

The Department of Administrative Services prepares the budget for the City of Albany. Most of the budget implementation functions are also performed in that office, although they also have a Department of Assessment and Taxation. In addition, Albany has two additional independently elected officials who work in budgeting and financial management, a City Auditor and a City Treasurer.

Human resources management. At the core of human resources management in local government lies the administration of the civil service system, which involves establishing transparent procedures for hiring, promotion, and performance assessment, fostering an environment of meritocracy. Local governments develop comprehensive job classification systems to enhance organizational structure and efficiency further, aligning positions with appropriate compensation levels to attract and retain qualified individuals. Human resources also include recruiting and selecting employees to match the skills and talents of the workforce with the needs of the government. Additionally, human resources include providing the employees with a compensation package that includes health and retirement benefits, often through negotiating with a collective bargaining unit (Streib & Pitts, 2007).

Buffalo and Rochester had departments entirely dedicated to human resources management (Department of Human Resources and Department of Human Resources Management, respectively). In Syracuse, an Office of Personnel and Labor Relations is located in their Executive Department, which handles human resources functions for the city. Similarly, Albany has an Office of Human Resources in its Administration Department.

Planning. Planning aims to facilitate a cohesive and sustainable development trajectory for the city. Comprehensive planning is a continuous process that integrates land use, infrastructure, transportation, and environmental considerations to holistically address the diverse facets of community growth. The instruments of planning, such as zoning ordinances, land use regulations, and building codes, serve as the tools for translating the envisioned goals into tangible actions. Many forces

seek to influence and benefit from the planning process, and governments navigate complex trade-offs between conflicting priorities, negotiate with diverse interest groups, and adapt plans to changing circumstances (Meck, 2007). In the four cities in this study, planning activities were centralized in a planning division that was usually a subcomponent of a department with a broader mission encompassing community and economic development.

Buffalo and Rochester have an office in their executive department dedicated to planning: the Office of Strategic Planning and the Office of City Planning, respectively. The Department of Neighborhood and Business Development performs this function in Syracuse. In Albany, it is done by the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services.

Economic development. City governments are active in economic development efforts to achieve various objectives, including job creation, tax revenue growth, quality-of-life improvements, income growth, and economic diversification. Cities often create community development departments to lead economic development efforts on their behalf. In addition to a governmental department, cities may create one or more different types of entities to address the complex task of economic development. Cities often task Economic Development Industrial Corporations with growth in areas of high unemployment or physical distress. Industrial Development Finance Authorities, on the other hand, focus on financing mechanisms, offering bonds or other financial tools to aid industrial expansion or relocation. Local development corporations focus on strengthening commercial and industrial sectors by revitalizing older downtown areas (Iannone, 2007). Economic development functions in the four cities are generally performed in the departments that also do planning functions.

Community development and affordable housing. City governments play a crucial role in fostering community development, focusing on the enhancement of tangible assets within geographically defined areas, often neighborhoods. These assets encompass a broad spectrum: physical structures, financial capital, natural resources, civil infrastructures, and the social ties that bind a

community together. In this context, one of the prominent responsibilities of local governments is ensuring affordable housing. Some residents could not afford adequate housing without intervention by the city government. In essence, community development and affordable housing initiatives together form a holistic approach to enhancing and sustaining the well-being of local neighborhoods (Brown-Graham & Morgan, 2007). Community development and affordable housing functions in the four cities are performed in the departments that do planning functions.

Public works. Municipalities' core public works services can be separated into two categories: engineering services and operations and maintenance services. Engineering services include land development engineering, traffic engineering, transportation planning, and operations engineering. Land development engineering (e.g., plan reviews and permitting) focuses on regulating growth, ensuring that new construction aligns with zoning and environmental regulations. Traffic engineering involves optimizing traffic flow and safety through design and signal management. Transportation planning takes a broader perspective, collaborating regionally on congestion mitigation. Operations engineering ensures that the city operates efficiently and complies with various federal and state regulations (Lazarus, 2007).

The second core public works category involves operations and maintenance services. This category includes equipment procurement and maintenance, streets and related infrastructure, facility maintenance, fleet management, park maintenance, airport services, and animal control. Equipment procurement and maintenance involves acquiring and servicing tools and machinery necessary for various public works tasks. Street and related infrastructure maintenance encompasses road repair, resurfacing, and maintaining sidewalks and curbs. Facility maintenance, such as custodial services, ensures public buildings and structures remain safe and functional. Fleet management oversees the upkeep of municipal vehicles, while park maintenance aims to provide clean and safe parks. Airport services encompass maintaining airport facilities, runways, and related infrastructure. Lastly, animal

control involves managing and responding to animal-related issues within the community (Lazarus, 2007).

Technology is also identified as an integral part of public works. From traffic light synchronization to advanced water treatment facility monitoring, information technology plays a substantial role in modern public works functions (Lazarus, 2007).

Another essential public works duty involves managing the city's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The CIP is a comprehensive blueprint for developing, enhancing, and maintaining infrastructure. The capital project design phase involves extensive planning, feasibility studies, and engineering assessments to ensure the project meets community needs and regulatory requirements. Once the design is finalized, the capital project delivery phase commences, involving budget allocation, procurement of necessary resources, contractor selection, and construction management. Cities design CIP programs to provide quality infrastructure that meets the evolving demands of its residents (Lazarus, 2007).

Finally, public works also include the management of essential utility services through enterprise funds. Water, wastewater, solid waste, gas, electric, and energy conservation services fall within this category. The water department ensures a clean and reliable water supply, managing treatment plants and distribution systems. Wastewater services involve the collection, treatment, and safe disposal of sewage. Solid waste management handles waste collection, recycling, and waste reduction initiatives. Gas and electric services provide residents with energy for heating, cooling, and powering homes and businesses. Additionally, energy conservation efforts aim to reduce consumption and promote sustainability. Enterprise funds enable local governments to maintain and improve these critical services while ensuring they remain financially self-sustaining (Lazarus, 2007).

Of all the public sector domains, public works is the highest ranking in terms of cost within the four cities. All the cities had a department that performed the bulk of their public works functions. In

Buffalo, this department was named the Department of Public Works, Parks, and Streets; in Rochester, the Department of Environmental Services; in Syracuse, the Department of Public Works; and in Albany, the Department of General Service. Syracuse is notable, however, for having a Department of Engineering separate from their primary public works department. Additionally, in all four cities, divisions within the fire and police departments performed core public works functions for those departments, specifically maintenance of buildings and vehicles used by those departments. Additionally, in Buffalo, Syracuse, and Albany, there was a separate department to perform functions related to supplying drinking water.

In all four cities, information technology functions were performed in Departments other than the primary public works department. The Department of Management Information Systems is responsible for information technology in Buffalo. In Rochester, these services were provided by the Information Technology Department. The Bureau of Information Technology, a division of the Executive Department, is responsible for these functions in Syracuse. The Office of Information Technology in the Department of Administrative Services is responsible for these functions in Albany.

Public parks and recreation. City governments provide residents with public parks, recreation, and cultural activities. (It is important to note that park maintenance is not included in this list, which is considered a public works activity.) These services can be provided directly by a city or delivered through alternative means, such as by contracting with a different government. Examples span a diverse range, such as establishing community gardens, organizing community festivals, and instituting youth sports programs (Goode-Vick, 2007).

In the four cities in this study, recreation and cultural events were provided by two different units within the government. In Buffalo, the Division of Parks & Recreation, which also maintains the parks, also provides recreational activities in the parks, and the Department of Community Services and Recreational Programming provides recreational opportunities outside of the parks through contracts

without outside entities. In Rochester, the Bureau of Communications and Special Events organizes cultural events in the city, and the Department of Recreation and Human Services provides recreational activities. In Syracuse, the Office of Communications oversees special events, and the Division of Recreation in the Department of Parks, Recreation & Youth Programs is responsible for recreational programs for residents. In Albany, the Office of Cultural Affairs Department of Administrative Services was responsible for recreational programming, and the Department of Recreation was responsible for recreational programming.

Health and human services. City governments frequently fill the gaps in federal and state health and human services programs, stepping in where these programs fall short. These municipal initiatives cover a wide range of services for various demographics within the community. For example, they offer non-recreational youth programs, such as youth employment programs, to support young people who are transitioning to adulthood. Cities also provide services to older adults, such as congregate dining or specialized transportation services. Ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act \, a federal law that aims to ensure that people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as non-disabled people, is also the responsibility of local governments. On a broader scale, cities may establish and maintain programs that focus on public health, ensuring the community's overall well-being (Benavides, 2007).

The four cities in this study provided limited health and human services. Buffalo provided senior services, youth services, and workforce employment training through its Department of Community Services and Recreational Programming. Rochester provided similar services in its Department of Recreation and Human Services. Syracuse has one program, Opportunity Works, within its Executive Department. Syracuse's Recreation Department provides senior services, and its Department of Youth and Workforce Services provides workforce services and services for children involved in the juvenile justice system.

Police services. City governments employ a police force to uphold the law, protect citizens, and maintain public order within their jurisdictions. They carry out duties ranging from traffic enforcement and accident investigations to responding to 911 calls for emergencies or disturbances. Additionally, they conduct criminal investigations, apprehend offenders, and collaborate with the judicial system to ensure justice is served. Many local police departments also engage in community policing initiatives, wherein officers foster positive relationships with residents, attend community events, and hold public forums to address concerns. This builds trust and encourages a collaborative effort in crime prevention. Moreover, in the face of growing global threats, many police forces now undergo specialized training for counterterrorism and disaster response scenarios (Cordner, 2007).

Policing is the second-highest ranking function in terms of cost within the four cities. All the cities had a primary Police Department. In addition, Rochester, Syracuse, and Albany had an oversight agency to handle complaints against the Police Department. In addition, Rochester had a separate Department that handled 911 calls for services (Department of Emergency Communications).

Fire and emergency services. City governments also safeguard their residents through fire and emergency services. The first line of defense for fire safety is establishing and enforcing a building code that minimizes risk to its occupants. Alongside regulatory measures, local governments often engage in public education, informing the public about fire safety practices and ways to prevent emergencies. City governments create fire departments to respond rapidly to fire emergencies, utilizing specialized equipment and trained personnel to tackle and mitigate such incidents. Furthermore, emergency medical services attend to injuries or health crises that arise from fires or other emergencies, providing immediate medical care and facilitating timely hospital transport when necessary (Swain, 2007). Fire and emergency services were the third most costly public sector domains, after public works and policing, and were all part of the aptly titled Fire Department.

Despite their coupling in the ICMA text, every city in this study separated firefighting and emergency medical services from enforcement of the building code. For this reason, the results section of this paper will look at traditional firefighting separately from building code enforcement. Code enforcement was done in the following Departments: In Buffalo, it was done in the Department of Permits and Inspection Services; in Rochester, it was done in the Department of Neighborhood & Business Development; in Syracuse, it was done in the Neighborhood & Business Development Department; and in Albany, it was done in the Department of Buildings and Regulatory Compliance. Additionally, the Law Department in each city served an administrative adjudication function in the building code enforcement process.

Researcher-identified activities. I then identified four additional governmental activities not covered in the International City/County Management Association text: Governing; Administration; Communication; and Legal.

Governing. Governing refers to the processes, structures, and decision-making protocols established to ensure smooth administration and effective service delivery. Local government governing structures consist of elected officials, such as city council members and mayors, who provide the policy direction for the city. These elected officials are responsible for holding the administrative branch accountable, ensuring transparency and integrity in governance. I only considered the Mayor and Council playing roles for this function.

Administration. Administration encompasses the core functions related to managing and coordinating the various activities of local government. This category includes the strategic planning and execution of policies the governing body sets. Administrative personnel facilitate communication between different departments and help the government reach policy goals broader than any individual department. I used this category as a catchall for services that did not fit into any other function and cut across several other functions. This category included applying for grants, intergovernmental relations,

data analysis, and research. While it seemed likely that every city did all these functions, some cities made these functions into their own identifiable category.

Communication. Communication is how the local government conveys information to its constituents. Governments disseminate information through various means, such as official websites, social media platforms, press releases, public meetings, and community outreach programs. Every city had either dedicated staff in its Administrative or Executive Department that managed communication for the city, or an identifiable unit elsewhere in the government. In addition, this category includes the public access television services in Buffalo and Albany.

Legal. Legal activities involve upholding and enforcing the laws and regulations that govern the city. This category includes legal advice to city officials, drafting ordinances and resolutions, representing the city in legal matters, and ensuring that city operations comply with federal, state, and local laws. It also includes enforcement of city ordinances relating to quality of life and nuisance violations. All four cities in this study had a Law Department.

Data Collection Methods

This study used the data collected in this paper's third and fifth chapters, which primarily relied on document analysis. This means that I used the same data to answer different research questions. This is a common practice in research, and it is known as secondary analysis. Secondary analysis can be a valuable way to gain new insights from existing data and is more efficient than collecting new data (Cheng & Phillips, 2014). In addition, I used the documents provided in the open government portals that were excluded from the analysis in Chapter 3.

Documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts are the six primary sources of evidence used in case study research (Yin, 2018). However, this paper only used one form of evidence: documentation. Documentation in case study research is any written or electronic record of the case that provides insights into the case's history,

context, perspectives, events, and impact. Furthermore, I limited my data to documentation available to the general public on the World Wide Web. I limited my evidence to documentation in this manner in the spirit of the research topic, open government. Open government is associated with government transparency. By limiting the evidence to information the government makes publicly available in the spirit of transparency, I sought to capture practices that truly represented open government. However, this strategy also presents a weakness in the study since it may not offer a comprehensive view and could inadvertently exclude illuminating information needed to understand the nuances of open government practices. This lack of varied sources of evidence could introduce bias, as it relies solely on the image the government chooses to present to the public.

In addition to documentation analysis, I also used the materials I created to answer the research questions in the third and fifth chapters to answer the two research questions in this chapter. Therefore, besides using the source documents described in the third- and fifth-chapters' data collection section, I also used the spreadsheets, memos, and other work materials I created when answering those researcher questions. In those two chapters, I identified critical differences in the boards used by the city governments and the types of data posted by cities on their open government data portal. In those analyses, I categorized government boards and datasets independent of the governmental functions they made more transparent or participatory. I performed those analyses in preparation for answering the research questions I asked in this chapter. This approach allowed for a comprehensive and multi-dimensional analysis. By cross-referencing the work materials from previous chapters with the research questions examined in this chapter, I ensured continuity and depth in my analysis.

I categorized each open government method according to the city (case) and the public sector domain (sub-case) corresponding with the dataset or board. I organized the use of each open government tool by city and public sector domain in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I made cells corresponding with more cities using that tool with a darker color and fewer cities with a lighter color.

As shown in Figures 5 and 6 on pages 155-156, I identified where one or more multiple cities or domains used the open government tool. This gave me a graphical representation of the distribution and prevalence of open government methods across different cities and domains.

Data Analysis

Yin (2018) states that there are four general analytical strategies for case study research: (1) Following the theoretical propositions, (2) Working your data from the ground up, (3) Developing a case description, and (4) Explaining plausible rival explanations. The first strategy, following theoretical propositions, involves aligning the investigation with the initial hypotheses or theories that led to the case study. This approach ensures that the research stays focused on its original objectives. The second strategy, working data from the ground up, emphasizes inductive reasoning, allowing researchers to identify patterns and themes emerging directly from the data. The third strategy, developing a case description, involves creating a detailed narrative that describes the case in depth. This comprehensive description can help understand the case's context and unique aspects. Lastly, the fourth strategy, explaining plausible rival explanations, entails considering and testing alternative theories or viewpoints that could challenge the primary conclusions of the study. This method aims to help maintain objectivity and thoroughness, ensuring that the conclusions drawn are not solely based on the initial hypothesis but against other possible interpretations.

Due to the nature of the research question, I relied on a theoretical proposition to answer the research question. This meant that my research was guided by specific theories that provided a framework for understanding the phenomena under investigation. The first theoretical proposition used in this study is the relationship between cities and the open government tools they use. The second theoretical proposition used in this study is the relationship between open government tools and the public sector domain in which cities implement them. The third theoretical proposition is the relationship between various open government tools.

To test the propositions, I used the pattern-matching analytical technique. This technique required me to test a pattern I predicted before collecting the data against the pattern I empirically identified in the collected data. If the patterns are similar, the case study has strong internal validity (Yin, 2018). Because I used a multi-case, embedded case study methodology, the ability to compare across multiple cases and subcases strengthened the validity and generalizability of the findings. Each case focused on a specific city's government practices, thus allowing me to see if the theoretical propositions held true in different contexts and settings.

For the first theoretical proposition, I predicted that there would not be a relationship between a city and the open government tools it uses. I hypothesized that the cities in this study would essentially use the same open government tools because they are in the same state and have similar populations and budgets. Additionally, the effects of policy diffusion, where the action of one government influences the choices of another government (Shipan & Volden, 2008), would likely cause the four cities in this study, which are in close physical proximity to one another, to implement similar open government tools.

For the second theoretical proposition, I predicted that there would be a relationship between open government tools and the public sector domain in which cities implement them. I hypothesized that cities tailor their utilization of open government tools to address a specific need or challenge inherent to each public sector domain. In particular, cities use the same policy instrument to achieve the same goal (e.g., good policing or safe housing), and specific open government tools are equipped to open that policy instrument where others are not. Thus, the public sector domain determines the types of open government tools implemented.

For the third theoretical proposition, I predicted that there would be a relationship between open government tools. I hypothesized that different open government tools are interconnected and often employed in a complementary fashion. This hypothesis does not suggest that the relationship is

necessarily causal. Instead, I posit that the relationship is more correlative, indicating that when a government uses one open government tool, the likelihood of another being implemented increases.

I began my analysis by comprehensively describing the open government tools within each city and public sector domain. I then tested the three propositions using the pattern-matching analytical technique described above. I then compared and contrasted individual case and subcase findings to identify similarities and differences. Finally, I developed a synthesis based on the comparison.

Description

Cases

Buffalo. I identified 21 unique government boards used by the City of Buffalo. It has created six affiliated yet independent entities to manage key service delivery areas and members of the public serve on the boards that manage these entities. Three of these boards manage entities responsible for providing water and wastewater services and the financial mechanisms that pay for water infrastructure. One of these boards manages an economic development agency. One board manages an agency responsible for managing a housing authority that provides housing for low-income residents. Finally, Buffalo uses a board to manage an agency that manages its federal Community Development Block Grant allotment; however, the agency's bylaws require seven members of that board to be designated elected officials or employees.

Buffalo utilizes five advisory boards that provide city officials with advice on specific topics. It uses two boards to advise it on matters that directly affect how the city is governed: the salaries of elected officials and the districts it uses to elect city council members. Buffalo also has an advisory board that advises it on transportation issues of bicyclists, pedestrians, and individuals with disabilities. Finally, Buffalo uses advisory boards to advise two offices with a sole employee: the Buffalo Arts Commission and the Commission on Citizens Rights and Community Relations. The Buffalo Arts Commission works to

encourage public art, and the Commission on Citizens Rights and Community Relations works to reduce discrimination and inequality.

Buffalo utilizes four review boards to examine requests and make recommendations to city officials, three of which review various city development projects. It uses a planning board to review land development plans to ensure they align with its comprehensive plan. It has a preservation board that reviews changes to historical, architectural, and cultural landmarks to ensure they are preserved. It also has an environmental management council that reviews projects to ensure that environmental changes caused by the project do not negatively impact the community. Buffalo also utilizes a board to review requests for capital funding and provides a recommendation to the city on the requests it feels should be prioritized.

Buffalo also used boards to investigate the qualifications and test the ability of plumbers and electricians before granting them a license to work in the city. It also used appeal boards to allow residents an opportunity to challenge the determinations of the assessor and zoning administrators if they disagreed with their determination. Buffalo used an ombuds board to assist employees paid from city funds to get their employer to pay the mandated living wage. Finally, Buffalo has an ethics board to enforce the city's code of ethics.

Buffalo provided 49 unique datasets that met this paper's open government data criteria. Of that, 22 datasets met this paper's criteria of governance data as it showed Buffalo officials exercising governmental powers and authorities. Governance data refers to datasets that show the exercising of governmental powers and authorities. This category encompasses information about decisions and plans formulated by public officers to govern and administer public affairs. These datasets included information about taxation and finance, land use and zoning, police and public safety, business licensing and regulation, and code enforcement. Institutional data, which are datasets that provide information about the city government's internal functioning and operations, constituted 17 of Buffalo's datasets.

Seven of the institutional datasets provided geospatial information related to various city services. In addition, five datasets provided operational data, four listed various governmental assets, and one included employee data. Seven of the datasets were collected data, referring to datasets accumulated and maintained by the city government. Of those, four described citizen action, and three listed infrastructure data. Finally, three of the datasets were classified as public service data, which are datasets that capture services performed by public employees for the benefit of the public.

The public service domain for Buffalo with the most datasets was budgeting and financial management, with 12 total datasets. In addition, it had nine for police services, eight for public works, six for fire and emergency services, four for clerk, and one each for communication, governing, human resources management, and public parks and recreation. Buffalo had the most datasets of any city in this study.

Rochester. I identified 16 unique government boards used by Rochester. It used three boards to manage affiliated yet independent agencies. The first agency was its library system, with a board of trustees managing and overseeing it. The second was the Rochester Economic Development Corporation, an economic development agency that assists small businesses in that community, focusing on economically distressed neighborhoods. The final governing board was for the city's land bank corporation, which acquires dilapidated properties and returns them to productive use.

Rochester had four boards to review land use projects. Similar to Buffalo, there were planning, preservation, and environmental boards. However, its Project Review Committee, responsible for reviewing more significant projects, was unique to Rochester.

Rochester used three boards to examine applicants for building trade licenses. Like Buffalo, it had occupational license boards for electricians and plumbers. Unique to Rochester was a board to review applicants for stationary engineering licenses, a trades position responsible for servicing heating and air conditioning equipment.

In addition to the boards mentioned above, there was an overlap in the boards Rochester used with those used by Buffalo. Rochester also had boards where citizens could challenge decisions made by the assessor and zoning administrator. In addition, Rochester also had an ethics board. Unique to Rochester, however, was a youth advisory council to advise city officials on issues affecting youth in the city, a police accountability board to help residents resolve complaints against the police department, and a municipal civil service commission, which is responsible for overseeing the hiring, promotion, and discipline of city government employees.

Rochester posted a total of 22 unique open government datasets. Included in that total are ten on a separate data portal for its police department. I classified eight of the 22 datasets as institutional data, including five from its Police Department. The institutional data from its police department were the police personnel, the pay of officers, the location of police cameras, the patrol beats of officers, and the boundaries of the police districts. The non-police institutional data provided by the city were the geospatial boundaries of city council districts, city-owned properties, and water hydrants.

Rochester provided six datasets of community data, including four with data collected by the police department. The data collected by the police department included in its data portal are crimes in the city, homicide victims, sex offenders, and shooting victims. There were two community datasets not related to policing. One was collected by the city's Department of General Services, and it was data about the trees in the city; the other was from the Bureau of Buildings and Zoning, which included footprints of all buildings in the city.

Rochester's data portals had six datasets that included governance data: three concerning code enforcement, and one showing zoning, preservation, and overlay districts, one showing business permits, and one showing tax parcels. The sole police services-related dataset showed homicide arrests in the city. The only public service dataset featured 311 case data.

In addition to the datasets listed on the Rochester Police Department open government data portal, the city provided detailed department documents as PDF files under four different hearings. First, the portal provided 120 general orders issued by the police chief that direct officers' actions. In addition, nine documents the portal listed as part of the police department's standard operating procedures. There were also 131 documents listed that the portal listed as part of the training manual. Finally, there were five documents listed that were listed as program reviews and memorandums of understanding.

Syracuse. I identified 12 boards utilized by the City of Syracuse. One of the boards managed an independent agency, the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority. As with Buffalo and Rochester, Syracuse had boards that considered appeals from residents and the city's assessor and zoning administrator. In addition, similar to Rochester, Syracuse had a board to review allegations of police misconduct.

I identified five review boards in Syracuse. Similar to Buffalo and Rochester, Syracuse had a planning board and a landmark preservation board to review projects to ensure they adhered to the city's comprehensive planning and preservation regulations. Unlike those two cities, however, Syracuse did not have a board examining projects' environmental impact. However, it did have two review boards for economic development purposes: one that reviewed requests for tax abatements and another to approve loans out of a city-created revolving loan fund. The final review board in Syracuse reviewed applications to display public art.

Syracuse also had three advisory boards. The first was a youth advisory board - similar to the one in Rochester. The other is a board recommending new city council district boundaries following the decennial census.

I identified 29 unique sets of open government data in the City of Syracuse. I classified eight of those datasets as governance data. Two datasets are related to business licensing and regulation: one listing the various permits granted to businesses and another listing properties in the rental registry.

Two datasets dealt with code enforcement in the city, one that listed code violations and another that designated all the unfit properties. The three others included the properties the city designated as historic properties (or part of a historic district), the parking violations in the city, and the assessment roll.

Four datasets provided public service data. One listed the requests to the SYRCityline Requests, which is Syracuse's 311 service for non-emergency services. Another dataset listed the results of lake water testing performed by the Syracuse Water Department before treating the water. One dataset provided the date and location potholes were filled. Finally, the last public service dataset lists the fire incidents to which the fire department responded.

Syracuse provided eight datasets of institutional data. The city provided a map of the districts for its city council, the planning neighborhoods, and the day for trash pickup for each area within the city. The governmental assets the city provided a dataset for are related to fire hydrants and the public artwork owned by the city. Finally, the city provided three datasets related to operational data - one that provided information describing the water main breaks, one describing the emergency snow routes, and another that provided pavement ratings for the streets in the city.

Albany. I identified 17 boards used by the City of Albany. Like most of the other cities in this study, Albany had boards to hear appeals from citizens about their assessment and zoning enforcement and to examine the qualifications of applicants for plumbing and electrician licenses. The two governing boards used by the city were to manage agencies that provided water service and finance water system infrastructure.

Albany created six advisory boards. Three of the boards dealt with utility services provided to residents: one advising the city on cable access programming, one advising the city on creating municipal internet service, and one advising it on its residential energy supply program. In addition, one

board advised the city on the implementation of its living wage law. The two other advisory boards dealt with celebrating diversity in the community and another on sustainable practices.

Albany had three review boards. Like the other cities, there were boards that reviewed projects to determine if they fit within the city's comprehensive plan and preservation regulations. In addition, there was a board that reviewed applications for tax abatements.

Albany had two more boards related to public employees. First, it had an ombuds board that investigated allegations of maladministration by police officials. Finally, it had a civil service board responsible for overseeing municipal government employees' hiring, promotion, and disciplinary actions.

Albany had seven sets of open government data in its portal, all relating to policing services. The governance data it had available dealt with the arrests the police department made, traffic citations it issued, and the incidents of use of force. The sole dataset of public service data was information for calls for service for the police department. Albany also provided two sets of institutional data on its website, one that listed patrol zones for its officers and the complaints it received from citizens. There was only one dataset of collected data on the website: the crimes reported to the Police Department.

Subcases

Clerk. Only two of the four cities had an open government practice related to Clerk functions. Buffalo and Syracuse both had open government datasets concerning licenses and permits the city issued. These datasets were not provided by the designated Clerk's Office but by Executive Departments that perform Clerk functions in this regard.

Both Buffalo and Syracuse provided information about properties on their rental registries on their open data portal. Operators of rental units are required to register the property of the rental units. I considered this information to be Governance Data because property owners would only be allowed to operate a rental property if they were on the registration. The city department responsible for code

enforcement was the dataset's source. The reason cities require rental registries is to improve the city's enforcement of building and housing codes of these properties to reduce the likelihood of fire emergencies.

Both Buffalo and Syracuse provided a dataset about building permits that they issued. Property owners must obtain a permit before constructing or making certain alterations to a building. I considered this information to be Governance Data because property owners are only allowed to take action if they obtain a permit. Like rental registry information, the governmental department responsible for code enforcement provides this data. The governmental department reviews the building plans before issuing the building permit to ensure it complies with the building and fire code. Therefore, I also reference this dataset in the Fire and Emergency Service section.

Buffalo provided a dataset regarding licensed contractors in the city. I considered this dataset to be governance data because anyone with a home improvement business must obtain a license before working in the city. The city requires a license to ensure that appropriately skilled individuals improve homes and that the improvements do not create unsafe dwellings for city residents. I reference this dataset and those related to the rental registry and, building permits in the Fire and Emergency Services subcase because they all are concerned with the building code and avoiding unsafe fire or other emergency conditions for residents.

Buffalo also provides information about business licenses. I consider this dataset to be Governance Data because business operators must obtain and retain a business license to operate within the city. Business operators are required to obtain a business license so that the city can collect revenue and monitor their activities, ensuring that they comply with various local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

Budget and Management. Five boards and fifteen open government datasets exist for the budget and management subcase. Each of the four cities had a Board of Assessment, and Buffalo had a

board as part of the budget planning process. Buffalo and Syracuse were the only cities with an open government dataset related to budgeting and management: 12 for Buffalo and two for Syracuse.

Buffalo's Citizens Planning Council is a review board that is part of the budget preparation process. The Council analyzes requests for capital funding from city departments and non-profit communities and makes recommendations to the Mayor for inclusion in his or her annual budget. Because this topic also involves the capital improvement program, the city's plan that identifies and prioritizes capital projects and equipment purchases, I also reference this board in the Public Works subcase.

I found several open government practices I classified as budgeting and management that concern property assessments. All four cities had an appeal board, the Board of Assessment Review, for property owners to try to get their assessment changed. A property owner's tax bill is a factor of the property's assessed value and the city's tax rate. The assessed value is an estimate of the market value of the property. Property owners are incentivized to reduce their property's assessed value because it reduces their tax bill. A city government assesses the properties to charge property owners their fair share for governmental services. These boards allow residents an avenue for residents who disagree with the government's determination of their assessed value. These boards aim to make the property assessment system accountable and fair.

Both Buffalo and Syracuse provide a dataset of their assessment rolls on their open government data portal. These datasets feature the assessed value of every property in the city and the factors the assessor may have used to determine the value. Buffalo also provides a True Tax dataset listing the properties' assessed value without certain tax exemptions, such as non-profit status, and a Tax Roll dataset listing the amount of taxes each property owed. I consider all these datasets as Governance Data because they determine what citizens are compelled to pay the city government when it issues tax bills.

Buffalo also had a dataset detailing the results of their in-rem tax lien foreclosure auctions. Property taxes are liens on properties. A city can enforce its lien against the property through an in-rem foreclosure. The city takes possession of the property to satisfy an obligation the owner has not met, such as unpaid property taxes, and then auctions the property to satisfy the debt. The dataset Buffalo provides lists the properties the city foreclosed upon and the amount the city sold the house for at auction. I classified this dataset as governance data because it shows the city taking ownership of a property from someone and selling it to someone else.

Buffalo also provided two datasets related to assessment with institutional data: tax districts and commercial district valuation. These datasets feature geospatial information that shows the boundaries of valuation districts. The assessor uses this data to help him or her determine his or her assessed value. The Tax Districts dataset is for residential properties, and the Commercial District Valuation is for commercial properties.

The next set of open government practices concerns revenue generated from parking enforcement. Both Buffalo and Syracuse provide a dataset for parking violations. These datasets relate to the city imposing a levy on automobile owners for illegally parking their vehicles. The datasets include the violation type, date, location, and the associated fine. I consider these datasets governance data because they capture data featuring the cities' ability to require automobile owners to pay a fine. Furthermore, because the cities have budgeted parking enforcement functions with other budgeting and financial management departments, I have classified parking enforcement datasets in the Budgeting and Financial Management functions. Buffalo provided one additional dataset regarding parking enforcement: parking meters. This dataset provided the location of every public parking meter in the city. I consider this dataset to be institutional data because it lists the location of a city asset.

Buffalo provided two datasets detailing its annual spending plan: one for expenditures and one for revenue. These datasets outline the city's anticipated expenses and revenue sources for a fiscal year.

They list the expenditures and revenue by city department and object. I consider these to be governance data since they reflect the plan the City Council and Mayor approved.

Buffalo also provided two additional datasets of institutional data: vendors and an open checkbook. The vendors dataset lists the names and contact information of the vendors it has used in the past. The open checkbook dataset is a general ledger of the city's expenditures. I consider these datasets to be institutional data because they describe the government's internal functioning.

Human Resources Management. The four cities in this study had a total of four government boards and one open government dataset that are classified in the human resources management subcase. Albany and Rochester both had a Municipal Civil Service Commission. Albany and Buffalo both had a governmental board for their living wage law, although both operated very differently. Finally, only Buffalo had a human resources management open government dataset: payroll data.

Rochester and Albany both have a Municipal Civil Service Commission. Five members comprise the Rochester board, and three comprise the Albany board. Partisan make-up is a consideration for both, as no more than three members in Rochester and two in Albany can belong to the same political party. Municipal Civil Service Commissions organize and oversee the examination process for various civil service roles. They classify all civil service positions within the municipality into various classes, each with its own rules regarding appointments and promotions. The Commissions ensure the cities are administering civil service in accordance with New York State Civil Service Law. Buffalo and Syracuse use the alternative method of civil service administration allowed by New York State, the Personnel Officer model, where an appointed official administers civil service.

Buffalo and Albany utilize a board to oversee the implementation of their living wage law, although the two boards differ quite a bit. These laws set a minimum wage higher than the federal or state minimum wage for work funded by the city, either directly or indirectly. The wage is calculated based on the cost of living in that community. Buffalo uses an ombuds board, and Albany uses an

advisory board. The Buffalo board receives complaints of noncompliance with the living wage law, investigates it, and recommends sanctions if the complaint is substantiated. The majority of the board comprises representatives of organizations with a vested interest in the topic, such as business community members and representatives of labor unions.

Albany's Living Wage Compliance Committee is an advisory board whose only duty is to submit an annual review of the law. Unlike the strict requirements for members on Buffalo's board, the Compliance Committee has generic qualifications that would allow a wide range of members to be on it.

Buffalo had the only human resources management open government dataset: payroll data. This dataset is similar to the open checkbook dataset I described in the budget and financial management subcase category; however, it is for expenditures related to employee salaries. This dataset includes the employee's name, the city department he or she worked in, and the amount he or she earned each paycheck, including overtime and the amount deducted. I classified this dataset as institutional data because it is internal to the functioning of the city government.

Planning. In the four cities in this study, there are fifteen planning-related government boards. Eleven of the boards are review boards, and four are appeal boards. Additionally, eleven open government datasets are related to planning. Seven of the datasets are governance data, two are institutional data, and two are community data.

All four cities have a planning board, which is a review board. These boards are responsible for implementing land use policies, zoning regulations, and comprehensive plans within a city. When property owners construct a new or make alterations to an existing building, they must first get approval from the city. Depending on what is built or changed, the planning board may be required to review the project to ensure it aligns with the city's plans. The board reviews the application and takes public comment to decide if the project is approved. Some planning board approvals are recommendations to

the city council, and other approvals are within the purview of the planning board and do not need further approval.

In addition to its planning board, Rochester has its Project Review Committee. Members of the public only make up 33 percent of the board, with six of the nine members elected officials or city employees. This board reviews major site plans, the most consequential of projects. This board will analyze the project and conduct public hearings before making a recommendation to the City Council.

All four cities have a review board specific to properties and districts with a historic designation, often called a preservation board. Most changes to historic structures or structures within a designated historic district require the owner to apply for a certificate of appropriateness from the city to ensure the changes maintain the cultural integrity the city is trying to maintain. These boards review proposed alterations or additions and provide a recommendation to the City Council.

Buffalo and Rochester have an environmental management council. Like planning and preservation boards, environmental management councils are review boards that review proposed projects. However, these boards are examining their project's potential environmental impacts, both natural- and man-made. Additionally, they are concerned with the local environment rather than global climate change. These boards make recommendations on projects to the city council or city department based on studying the project and conducting hearings.

All four cities had a zoning board of appeals. These boards provide a mechanism for landowners to appeal decisions made by zoning enforcement officers. The board will review the appeal and conduct a public hearing before deciding. These boards are responsible for granting variances from zoning ordinances, interpreting zoning laws, and hearing appeals from decisions made by zoning officials. A variance is a waiver from a specific requirement of the zoning ordinance.

Every city except Albany had an open government dataset related to planning except Albany. Buffalo had one dataset I classified as institutional data: Planning Neighborhoods. A planning

neighborhood is a geographically defined area that serves as a unit for spatial planning and community engagement. I classified this dataset as institutional data because it represented the internal functioning of the city planning division, and there are limited differences for residents from being placed in one neighborhood compared to another.

Buffalo has three datasets that show limitations to properties: Zoning Map, Historic Landmarks, and Historic Districts. Zoning is the regulatory process by which local governments divide land into specific areas, known as zones, to govern land use, building types, and activities permitted within those areas. A zoning map designation indicates the acceptable uses of a property and determines other restrictions a property owner may have on his or her property, such as size. The Historic Landmarks and Historic Districts datasets indicate the properties or areas that have been designated as historic; the owners of these properties are only allowed to make changes to these properties as per specific guidelines most other properties do not have to follow and with the approval of a separate board. Therefore, I have designated these datasets as governance data.

Buffalo has two additional planning-related datasets containing governance data: Planning, The Zoning, Historic Preservation Approvals, and Planned Unit Development. Both of these datasets show approvals of projects. The Planning, Zoning, and Historic Preservation Approvals show approvals from the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Historic Preservation Board; the Planned Unit Development shows approvals from the City Council.

Rochester provided one dataset: Zoning, Preservation, and Overlay Districts. This dataset integrates the zoning and preservation designations into a single dataset. As described above, these designations severely impact what a property owner may do with their property. Therefore, I have categorized this dataset as governance data.

Syracuse has three datasets available: Historical Properties, Parcel Map, and Syracuse Planning Neighborhoods. I classified the Historical Properties and Syracuse Planning Map as Governance Data and

Institutional Data, respectively, for the same reasons I gave the similar datasets from Buffalo those classifications. The Parcel Map dataset featured information about every property in that community. I designed this dataset as collected data because it did not represent any specific action or operation of the government, and the government seemed to be providing this information as a public service.

Economic Development. I identified five boards that qualified for this study related to economic development. Three were review boards: two industrial development agencies in Albany and Syracuse and the Syracuse Economic Development Corporation. Additionally, I identified two governing boards over city-affiliated economic development agencies, the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation and the Rochester Economic Development Corporation. No open government datasets were related to economic development.

An industrial development agency is a public benefit corporation created to promote and advance the city's economic welfare (DiNapoli, 2022a). The board oversees an agency that assists businesses, and some may consider these boards as governing boards under the schema used in this paper. However, although the boards have some governing functions, an analysis of their agendas and minutes shows they spend most of their time reviewing applications for tax abatements and other financial incentives. Therefore, I have classified these boards as review boards. New York State gives industrial development agencies special powers to provide tax abatements without further approval from city officials or another entity. The Albany City Council appoints its Agency board members, and the Syracuse Mayor appoints its Agency board members.

Syracuse has a second review board, the Syracuse Economic Development Corporation, that oversees a different component of its economic development efforts. The City formed the Corporation as a public authority that acts as a revolving loan fund available to local businesses for expansion efforts. The board primarily reviews applications for business loans. Although, as with the industrial

development agency boards, the Corporation board oversees an entity, I have designated it as a review board because its raison d'etre is to review business loan applications.

Both the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation and the Rochester Economic Development Corporation are niche economic development agencies run as not-for-profit organizations with boards. The Buffalo Urban Development Corporation exists to reclaim distressed land and buildings for future development, and its board is comprised of 19 members: ten from the public appointed by city officials and nine who are city officials or from another governmental entity. The Rochester Economic Development Corporation addresses economic disparities in that community, and its board is comprised of up to 13 members, with five appointed by the Mayor and City Council.

Community Development and Affordable Housing. I identified six boards related to community development and affordable housing, all governing boards. Four boards oversaw housing authorities providing housing opportunities to low-income residents. One of the boards managed the urban renewal agency. The last board managed a land bank corporation. I did not identify one open government dataset related to community development and affordable housing.

Each of the four cities in the study has a governing board that oversees an independent public corporation that provides public housing for low-income city residents and implements programs for those residents that encourage self-sufficiency. The respective mayor appointed five of the board's seven members, and the tenant population elected two. The board oversees the corporation, which can include several thousand housing units.

Buffalo's Urban Renewal Agency has a few members from the public on its board. Two of its nine members are from the public, with the other seven being elected officials or city employees. The Agency operates community development programs as part of the city's federal Community Development Block Grant allocation. The board governs the Agency doing this work. An urban renewal agency is a public authority created for these programs and given special powers by New York State. All

four cities in this study have an urban renewal agency; however, Albany's, Rochester's, and Syracuse's agencies only have elected officials and city employees on their boards.

Like Buffalo's Urban Renewal Agency, the Rochester Land Bank Corporation has limited public involvement on its board. The board has seven members, with five spots allocated to elected and appointed officials and two for members of the public. The Corporation works to return distressed residential properties to productive use to enhance the quality of life within the city's neighborhoods. The board provides oversight over the Corporation. The three other cities had a land bank corporation; however, most of those board members are County government appointees.

Public Works. I identified nine boards related to public works in the four cities included in this study. Six were governing boards, overseeing an independent entity related to the city. Five boards dealt with water or wastewater service, and one board had oversight responsibility over an airport. Three advisory boards provided recommendations to the cities on an energy program, internet service, and transportation issues. The cities also published 18 datasets on its open government data portals related to public works: four classified as public service data, four classified as institutional data, and 10 classified as community data.

Five governing boards related to public works dealt with water and wastewater in Buffalo and Albany. Both cities had a Water Board and a Municipal Water Finance Authority. The Water Boards oversaw water services, such as water treatment and distribution. The Municipal Water Finance Authorities managed the financial aspects of water management, such as issuing bonds or securing loans to finance water infrastructure projects.

In addition to the water and wastewater boards, I identified another governing board in Syracuse that operates the airport, the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority. The Authority is a public benefit corporation that owns and operates the airport and has complete management responsibilities.

Buffalo has an advisory board dedicated to the transportation needs of bicyclists, pedestrians, and persons with disabilities. The board works with the city's public works department to provide input on transportation projects the city is conducting to ensure they benefit individuals who do not drive automobiles. The board also advocates for city programs and funding, such as snow-plowing sidewalks or shelters for public transportation users.

Albany also had two advisory boards, one for its community choice aggregation program and one for municipal internet service. Community choice aggregation is a program where a city automatically enrolls municipal residents in a bulk electricity-buying program. The board functions similarly to a governing board, except its actions are recommendations to the city because it has no official authority. Only two of the five board members are not city elected officials or employees.

Albany empaneled a board to advise it on municipal internet service. The board is responsible for exploring the feasibility of establishing this service and the next steps if it advises the city to pursue this endeavor. Albany does not offer municipal internet service and is exploring the opportunity,

Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse provided public service data related to their 311 program. By dialing 311, citizens can report non-emergency issues such as graffiti, potholes, and litter. Each city provided service request calls in the open government data portals, including disposition information. Additionally, Syracuse provided an additional public service dataset in its open government data portal, lake water testing. Syracuse tests lake water because it draws water from a lake to make drinking water. The data shows the quality of the water.

Buffalo and Syracuse provided a total of five datasets related to public works that were institutional data. Both cities published a dataset related to when residents can expect their trash and recycling to be picked up. Buffalo also published a dataset listing what items are recyclable and not. Syracuse also published a dataset showing their pavement ratings for city streets and the water main breaks it experienced.

Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse published a total of nine public works datasets that were community data. All three cities published a dataset related to the trees in the city. Buffalo and Syracuse both published a dataset showing where citizens could find bike lanes and bike infrastructure. Another dataset showing the location of city infrastructure, Syracuse published a dataset showing the location of every water service line. Buffalo published a dataset showing the legal rights-of-way in the city. Buffalo also published two datasets that showed the actions of citizens, the daily traffic volume of city streets, and the recycling and waste collection statistics of its citizens.

Public Parks and Recreation. I identified two boards and two public parks and recreation datasets, all related to public art. I classified these boards and datasets in the public parks and recreation function area because it involves the government providing a cultural opportunity for its residents for their leisure and enjoyment. Buffalo utilizes an advisory board in this area, while Syracuse uses a review board. The datasets these cities provide are classified as institutional data.

The Buffalo Arts Commission is an advisory board dedicated to maintaining, growing, and curating the city's public art collection. The city has a law that requires it to spend one percent of its capital improvement budget on public art. The Commission is responsible for devising a plan for that allotment and submitting it to decision-makers for their consideration, including conserving existing and commissioning new public art. On the other hand, the Syracuse Public Art Commission is a review board that reviews public art applications. The Commission has the authority to approve or deny applications without further action by any city official.

Buffalo and Syracuse have a dataset available that catalogs the public art owned by that respective city. These datasets are classified as institutional data because they catalog an asset the city owns. The datasets include information describing the data and its location.

Health and Human Services. I identified two boards related to health and human services, both advisory, and no open government datasets. Rochester and Syracuse both have Youth Advisory Councils

that are as much a youth recreational activity as a bona fide advisory board to the city. Both cities have created a council of youths to advise city officials on the needs of young people. However, the program's design makes it clear that these programs aim to engage young people in an educational opportunity.

Police Services. I identified three boards related to police services, all acting as ombud boards. The three police boards I identified are Albany's Community Police Review Board, Rochester's Police Accountability Board, and Syracuse's Citizen Review Board. All three boards receive and investigate complaints about the actions of police officers and assist the city in taking appropriate action if the allegations are substantiated.

I identified 27 open government datasets related to police services. Ten of the datasets were institutional data. Albany, Buffalo, and Rochester provided datasets showing the geospatial territories of various police districts or where the officers patrolled. Buffalo and Rochester also provided the location of each police camera. Rochester provided two datasets with detailed information about officers, including one with their name, age, race and length of employment, and another with their salaries. Albany provided operational data that listed complaints by citizens about police conduct.

Seven datasets were community data collected by the police departments, all describing citizen actions. Each city provided crimes reported. In addition to reported crimes, Buffalo also provided a dataset that listed traffic incidents. Rochester also provided datasets that listed homicide victims, shooting victims and sex offenders.

I identified seven datasets containing governance data. Albany provided three: arrests, use-of-force incidents, and traffic citations. Buffalo also provided three datasets: quality-of-life summonses, traffic stop receipts, and uniform traffic tickets. Rochester only provided one dataset, homicide data.

Finally, only two datasets provided data about public services provided by or directed by the police. Albany provided a dataset that lists all its calls for service. Buffalo provided a dataset that showed the automobiles it towed.

Fire and Emergency Services. I did not identify any government boards for traditional firefighting and EMS service delivery. However, I did identify four open government datasets. Buffalo and Syracuse provided an open government dataset listing all their fire hydrants' locations. Buffalo provided a list of emergency parking locations for a snow emergency. In addition, Syracuse included a dataset that listed all the fire incidents that its Fire Department responded to.

However, there were more open government practices that included building code enforcement that prevented fires or other types of emergencies. I identified seven government boards, all occupational license boards, in three cities. In addition, I identified eight open government datasets related to this topic as well.

The seven government boards are all related to evaluating tradespeople applying for licenses to work in that city. The licensing process helps to prevent fires and other emergencies by ensuring that tradespeople have appropriate experience to work without oversight and are familiar with the applicable trade codes or regulations. Albany, Buffalo, and Rochester all have boards to oversee the licensing of electricians and plumbers. In addition, Rochester has a board to oversee the licensing of stationary engineers, who are responsible for operating and maintaining stationary equipment, such as boilers and generators.

Most of the open government datasets I identified in this category were governance data and related to the cities' building code enforcement. Buffalo and Syracuse both provided a dataset that listed all housing code violations and, therefore, did not meet the minimum standards for health and safety. Buffalo also provided a dataset showing the housing court cases it pursued. Syracuse also listed properties it deemed unfit, and Rochester listed the structures it demolished due to it being unsafe. Buffalo and Rochester also provided a list of the Certificates of Occupancies it granted. Finally, Buffalo also provided public service data in the inspections it performed.

Governing. I identified three government boards and three open government datasets related to governing. Buffalo and Syracuse both have an advisory board to recommend a map of districts for the City Council after the decennial census. In addition, Buffalo has an advisory board that recommends updates to elected city officials' salaries. The three open government datasets are from Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse, with each city providing a map of city council districts.

Administration. I identified six government boards related to administration. Both Buffalo and Rochester empaneled an Ethics Board to ensure its officers and employees adhered to ethical standards. Both Albany and Buffalo empaneled an advisory board to celebrate diversity and curtail discrimination. In addition, Albany formed an advisory board to address global climate change within the community and promote sustainable practices.

Communication. I identified one government board and one open government dataset related to communication. The sole board was from Albany, the Public, Education, and Government Access Oversight Board, an advisory board that assists the city in overseeing the studio used for producing public access programming on cable television. The sole open government dataset was from Buffalo, and it was city website analytics data.

Analysis

Proposition One

The first theoretical proposition was that there would not be a relationship between cities and the open government practices they use. I found evidence that both supported and contradicted this theoretical proposition.

The strongest evidence supporting the theoretical proposition is that the four cities had many identical boards, such as planning boards, zoning boards of appeals, and boards of assessment review. I expected to find identical boards in the four cities since New York State statute often requires these boards. In addition to identical boards, the existence of similar boards not required by statute is further

evidence. The cities created boards using different models to address challenges in the same public sector domains. For example, cities created boards to address the topics of public art or the implementation of its living wage law, although the models of these boards differ. The creation of these boards suggests a natural overlap not caused by legal requirements, such as by the city's sharing similar characteristics or by policy diffusion, causes cities to develop similar open government practices.

There was no clear pattern that cities relied on one open government tool at the expense of others. Although there were instances of unique use of these tools, it seemed to me that their utilization was likely the natural outgrowth of a specific public policy need. Compared to the others in the study, no city was strongly associated with one open government tool. While a rival hypothesis may have posited that city governments may stick to an open government tool it had previously implemented successfully, this study found no distinguishing pattern.

However, the finding that the cities had different priorities in implementing open government practices in various public sector domains contradicts the theoretical proposition. When examining the open government datasets the cities provided on their website, most of Rochester's datasets and all of Albany's datasets were related to policing. Buffalo and Syracuse, on the other hand, provided a more balanced assortment of datasets.

Proposition Two

The second theoretical proposition was that there would be a relationship between open government practices and the public sector domain in which cities implement them. I found compelling evidence that this was accurate. The analysis suggested that city governments were more likely to implement open government practices for functions in which they exercise the government's sovereign authority. Although, as a qualitative study, this paper cannot provide strong statistical support for this assertion, the amount and variation of open government practices within these functions compared to other functions city governments performed is significant. In particular, I found open government

practices clustered around four key areas: taxation and finance, land use, building safety, and policing. These are areas where governments and their officers are entrusted with significant powers to take action, including the enforcement of laws and regulations and, importantly, the application of punitive measures. These areas are susceptible to public scrutiny and demand transparency, which likely motivates the higher adoption of open government practices.

A hypothesis for the relationship between open government practice and public service domain relates to the policy instrument typically used in that domain. The four types of policy instruments are authority instruments, treasure instruments, nodality instruments, and organizational instruments. Authority instruments work through laws, regulations, and standards to control behavior. Treasure instruments involve the use of financial resources to incentivize or disincentivize behaviors. Nodality instruments rely on the distribution of information to influence behavior. Organizational instruments involve direct action by the government to achieve policy objectives (Hood, 1983, as cited in Bertelli, 2012). A hypothesis that can be made due to this research is that open government tools were most likely used when the government used authority instruments. These instruments inherently possess a higher level of public visibility and impact, necessitating transparency and public oversight to maintain trust and accountability.

In taxation and finance, cities use open government tools to ensure fairness in the amount of taxes they require property owners to pay. The cities create boards of assessment appeals to serve a quasi-judicial function of determining the final assessed or taxable assessed valuation when it has received a complaint concerning an assessment. These boards counterbalance the power of the assessor and offer an avenue for citizens to challenge their tax assessments. In addition, two cities - Buffalo and Syracuse - both provided a copy of the complete assessment roll in their open government data portal. By providing the entire tax roll online, these cities promote transparency and allow citizens to see how the city has assessed their property relative to others.

Review boards are the open government tool cities frequently use related to land use. Property owners must get approval from various government boards made up of citizens to make many changes to their property to ensure that such changes comply with city plans, environmental regulations, and historical designations. In addition, residents can appeal the administration of the zoning code to an appeal board (i.e., zoning board of appeals) and be granted variances to the zoning code. These boards are at the intersection between the rights of property owners to use their property as they see fit and the government's interest in orderly and sustainable development.

The open government tools cities used for building safety fell into two categories: oversight of tradespeople working on buildings and transparency about properties unsafe for occupation. Three cities used boards of experts and stakeholders to license plumbers and electricians. Cities have an incentive to oversee these professions because of the direct impact their work has on the safety of the building's occupants and the condition of the underlying infrastructure. In addition, three cities posted datasets in their open government data portals that provided information about unsafe properties.

It is likely not a coincidence that the first three government functions I identified dealt with private property. In fact, these three functions do not include direct services to the public but, instead, are related to how private property is used, valued, and maintained. These three functions may not even be considered the government's primary role in that particular public sector domain (i.e., taxation and assessment in budget and finance, land use in planning, and building safety in fire and emergency services). Instead, they are functions in which governments use authority instruments that reflect their regulate and control.

Of the four functions that I found that cities significantly used open government tools, only one did not include private property: policing. However, policing is significantly different from other functions city governments perform. The police enforce the law and maintain public order, and cities give them a high degree of discretion and unique powers not enjoyed by other government employees.

While the above three functions (i.e., taxation and assessment, land use, and public safety) reflect the use of an authority instrument, policing reflects direct, and occasionally violent, enforcement of city authority.

In policing, cities used open government tools to make their police departments more transparent—the only type of open government data provided by Albany was about policing services. Rochester developed a second open government data portal just for its police department, which included copious amounts of policies and training materials in addition to open government datasets. There was a wide array of types of datasets related to policing, ranging from detailed information about the internal workings of police departments to data about the community collected by the police department. In addition, three of the four cities created ombuds boards to help residents pursue complaints of maladministration by police officers. Cities have made police services the most accountable service they provide to the public.

Proposition Three

The third theoretical proposition posited that there would be a relationship between open government tools. However, I did not find evidence to support this proposition. The use of one tool did not appear to predict the use of another tool.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This research has limitations that readers should consider when interpreting the results. One limitation is the focus solely on documentation as a data collection method. As described above, in the spirit of the research topic, I intentionally limited the evidence in this study to documentation available to the general public. However, the findings may not be as robust if other sources of evidence were used. Furthermore, the veracity of the documentation is another concern, as there is a potential for inaccuracies in the documents I used.

Another limitation was the geographical scope of the study. I concentrated on four cities within the same state. While this helped control for extraneous variables related to governance differences between states, it also limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the scope to include cities from various states or even different countries to examine whether the findings hold in different contexts.

The multi-case, embedded case study approach also imposes limitations. While I could draw comparisons and establish patterns, the nature of case studies does not allow for the creation of statistically significant results. The pattern-matching methodology may result in identifying patterns that fit too closely to the cases (and subcases), particularly since I selected the cases using replication logic. Additionally, pattern matching may cause confirmation bias, as I may have been predisposed to finding evidence that supports my preconceived notions or hypotheses. This can limit the objectivity and impartiality of the study, which in turn can impact the validity of the results.

Finally, future research on open government should be a re-evaluation of the theoretical underpinnings of the open government philosophy. This paper's literature review began by exploring the scholarly work conceptualizing open government, concluding that it was still a work in progress. However, it is largely assumed to be rooted in democratic traditions, with transparency, participation, and accountability as key components. I propose that it is necessary to explore the level of government at the bottom of the federalist system of governance to illuminate open government's conceptual underpinnings due to their direct impact on citizens' lives. Unlike higher levels of government, where policies and decisions are often mediated through multiple layers of bureaucracy before impacting the populace, local government actions have immediate and tangible effects on its citizens. This proximity to the citizenry not only allows for more direct observation of open government practices but also provides an unobstructed setting to study these practices and develop a grounded theoretical framework. It is at this level that the principles of transparency, participation, and accountability can be seen in their most

direct form, unaffected by the complexity and abstraction of governments at higher levels of government.

I suggest that the proper way to think about open government is a collection of methodologies, platforms, and practices that governments use in combination with other types of policy instruments (e.g., direct provision or regulation) to increase the accountability of the government and, ultimately, their citizen's trust in government. Governments have an array of powers and use a variety of policy instruments. Existing research has not made that distinction nor contemplated the logical consequences of applying open government principles to these diverse mechanisms. Instead, it has treated the government as a monolith, failing to appreciate the nuance of what governments actually do. Future theoretical research should examine the differences between actions requiring sovereign authority and those that do not. In addition, research should examine the policy instrument used by the government and how an open government tool may or may not make the government more accountable.

Figure 5

Number of Cities with Different Types of Government Boards in Each Service Delivery Domain

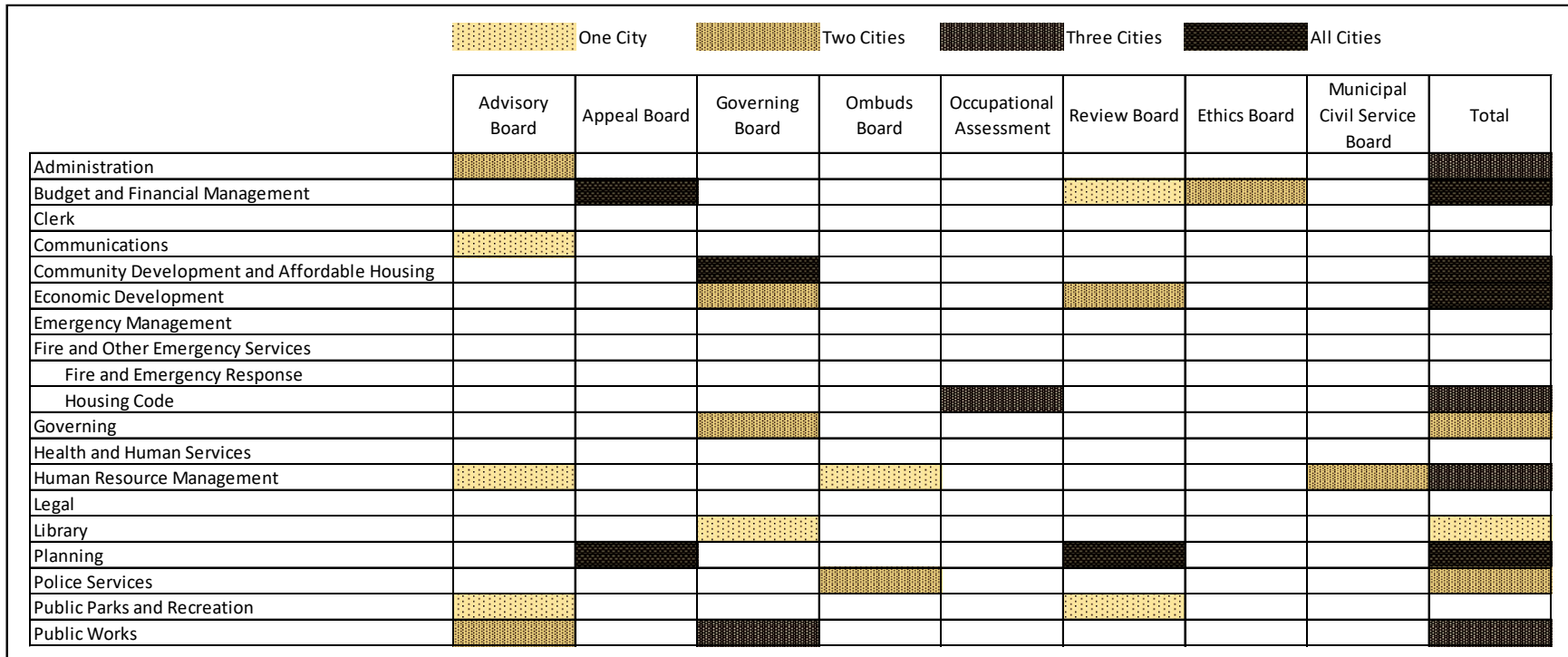
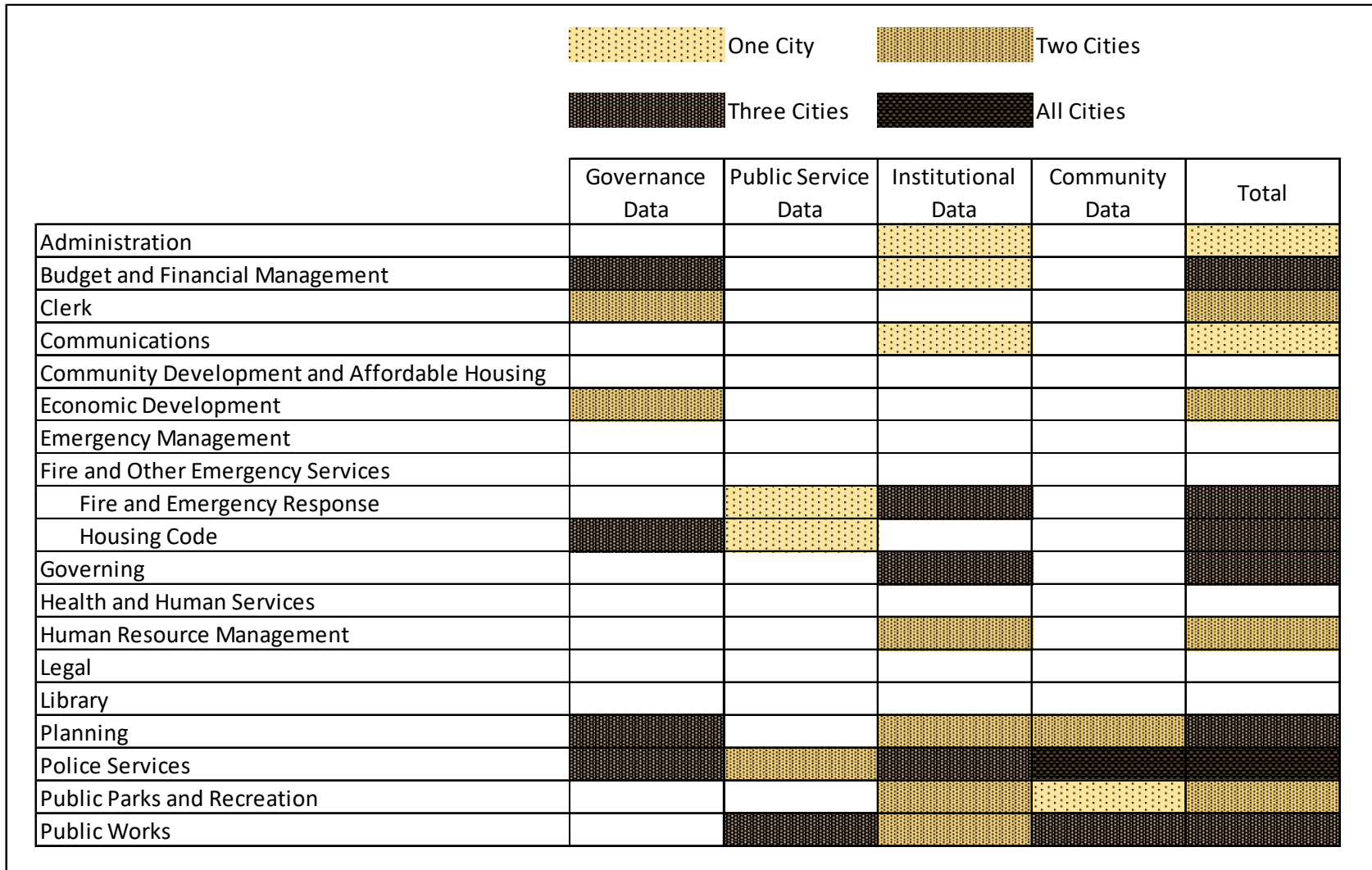


Figure 6

Number of Cities with Open Government Datasets in Each Service Delivery Domain



Chapter 7: Recommendations for Public Administrators

The purpose of this paper has not been to assess or rank the four cities studied in terms of their implementation of open government practices. Instead, I focused on the more narrowly defined task of understanding how these cities have adopted open government tools. Although I have avoided this type of normative evaluation, this paper is not value-neutral. In the intellectual tradition of Dwight Waldo, my exploration of open government practices within these cities is inherently interwoven with democratic principles and ethical considerations. In this light, this paper reflects a broader quest for transparency, accountability, and participation in public administration. This exploration is grounded in the belief that open government is not merely a set of administrative procedures but a philosophy that aims to champion the principles of democracy. However, it is also important to recognize that implementing specific open government tools neither ensures the realization of these democratic principles nor does the absence of these tools necessarily indicate their disregard. Instead, public administrators must evaluate open government tools by their ability to enhance democratic values against the practical realities of governance. I hope this paper provides new and profound insights into this topic so that public administrators can make more informed decisions if, when, and how to implement open government tools for their constituencies.

Now that I have concluded the analysis of the four cities, I turn my attention to directly addressing public administrators, helping them understand and appreciate open government tools and their role in democratic governance. Open government practices can serve as a conduit through which they operationalize the ethos of democracy. However, if not used appropriately, these strategies can become façades for tokenistic measures that do not substantively contribute to democratic governance. Therefore, to effectively employ open government tools, public administrators must discern between the types of open government tools and their effects on democratic governance. Open government is not a monolithic concept but a broad spectrum of tools, each with unique implications for how citizens

interact with their government and contribute to the democratic process. By developing a deeper understanding of how these tools can be used to embody and promote democratic values effectively, public administrators can better align their actions with the overarching goals of transparency, accountability, and public participation.

Participation

Public participation embodies the democratic principle of government by the people. Most democratic governments use forms of public participation, such as *three minutes at a microphone*, where citizens can voice their concerns and opinions at city council meetings. In addition, as discussed in this paper, many democratic governments impanel voluntary boards to serve important roles within their jurisdiction. To develop effective open government tools that enhance participation, public administrators must first develop insights into the goals for the participation and the context in which it is used.

Perspectives on Participation

As explored in earlier chapters, particularly Chapter 4, participation can have different and conflicting meanings depending on the perspective taken. That perspective can significantly influence how public administrators structure public participation and how citizens perceive it. From a state-centric perspective, participation is primarily a means for citizens to offer ideas and expertise to improve governmental decision-making. The participant-centric view emphasizes including citizens' concerns, needs, interests, and values in all aspects of governance. The societal-centric perspective views public participation as a tool for empowering marginalized or historically excluded groups.

Public administrators should consider these different perspectives when developing participatory opportunities, considering the jurisdiction's social, cultural, and historical context and the unique traits of the public sector domain. For example, a public administrator who works for a police agency in a diverse community that has experienced recent examples of police brutality may want to

identify ways to empower members of marginalized groups in the community when developing a participatory tool to improve police practices. In contrast, a public works administrator in a small, homogenous community might focus more on gathering local expertise to improve recycling rates. By considering these multiple perspectives, public administrators can design participatory tools that effectively address their communities' specific needs and challenges.

Dimensions of Participation

When deciding to implement an open government tool to enhance participation, public administrators need to consider several factors. The first three are taken from Fung's (2006) democracy cube framework: 'who is involved in the decision-making process,' 'the degree of influence participants have on the outcome of the decision-making process,' and 'how participants make decisions.' The next factor identified in this paper is the position of the participatory method within the overall policy process. The final factor, specific to government boards, is how matters are brought forth for the consideration of participants.

In the Democracy Cube framework (Fung, 2006), the first dimension, 'who is involved in the decision-making process,' emphasizes inclusivity in public participation. This dimension challenges public administrators to consider which segments of the population are engaged in participatory processes. The second dimension, 'degree of influence participants have on the outcome,' addresses the impact of public input on decision-making. This aspect of the framework scrutinizes whether public participation is merely symbolic or if it genuinely influences governmental action. The third dimension, 'How participants make decisions,' focuses on the methods and processes through which public input is gathered and deliberated. This dimension engages public administrators to design participatory processes that result in fair and appropriate collective decision-making.

In addition to the three dimensions established by Fung (2006), I have identified two additional dimensions in this paper. The first is the position of the participatory tool in the policy process.

Participatory action is not limited to policy-making and may also occur in policy implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Public administrators should tailor their participation strategies by identifying the stage of the policy process where participation is most appropriate. For instance, public input during policy development may differ significantly from feedback during the implementation phase. Understanding this dimension enables public administrators to design more meaningful participatory processes that align with the specific requirements of each policy stage.

The second additional dimension is how matters are brought forth for participant consideration. This dimension relates to how issues or topics are introduced into the participatory process. This dimension highlights the origin of the issues under consideration and plays a significant role in shaping the nature and scope of public participation.

Transparency

Statutes that require freedom of information require governmental agencies to provide governmental records when requested, with limited exceptions when the records include information that may compromise personal privacy, national security, law enforcement, legal processes, or confidential business information. In addition, many governmental entities proactively publish governmental records on their websites or governmental data through an open government data portal. When deciding to implement a transparency tool, public administrators must balance these tools' effects on democratic accountability with the potential harm they may cause.

As described in Chapter 5 of this paper, I developed a framework to analyze governmental records and data that governments make available to the public. Using my framework, public administrators can categorize government data into one of four categories: governance data, public service data, institutional data, and collected data. This taxonomy provides a structured approach for evaluating the types of information governments may make accessible to the public. Each category offers a different form of democratic accountability. For instance, governance data, which includes

records on the use of governmental authority, empowers citizens to assess if the government's actions are fair and just. On the other hand, public service data can be leveraged to gauge and improve public service performance, thus enhancing government operations' efficiency and effectiveness. Institutional data, which encompasses information on internal operations and transactions of government entities, plays a critical role in making government operations transparent. By making such data available, public administrators can deter malfeasance. Meanwhile, collected data, although not directly linked to a specific democratic function, provides valuable context and auxiliary information that the public can use in conjunction with other data types to enrich public understanding and analysis.

When determining when to add an open government tool to enhance transparency, such as publishing government records and data, public administrators should determine the form of democratic accountability they are trying to achieve by being transparent. They should identify the specific type of vulnerability the governmental agency faces, such as abuse of power or inefficiency, and examine how each potential tool addresses that vulnerability. They then should consider the practicality of implementing the tools that could effectively address those vulnerabilities. Only then should they proceed with the implementation of the tools, ensuring that these actions align with the overall goals of promoting democratic values within their jurisdiction.

Public Sector Domain and Policy Instruments

The public sector domain and the policy instruments governments utilize within these domains are pivotal in determining the most effective open government tool to deploy. The public sector domain refers to specific segments within the governmental framework, each characterized by unique interrelated services offered to the public, such as policing, human services, or urban planning. Given the distinct nature of these domains, a one-size-fits-all approach to open government is impractical. Instead, tailoring open government tools to align with the specific policy instruments employed within each domain is necessary.

For instance, in a domain where a government agency primarily employs an authority instrument, which involves the power to command or enforce compliance, specific open government tools become particularly pertinent. In such contexts, the government should focus on publishing comprehensive governance data. This transparency enables the public to scrutinize and understand how the government exercises its authority, assessing the fairness and justice of these actions. Additionally, establishing an appeal or ombuds board is beneficial in these domains. Such boards provide citizens with a formal avenue to voice concerns and seek redress regarding the government's exercise of authority.

Conversely, in domains where a government agency relies heavily on an organizational instrument, namely its capacity to structure and manage operations, the selection of open government tools should change. In these scenarios, the emphasis should be on publishing detailed public service data. This data can offer insights into the operational aspects of government services, fostering transparency and accountability in service delivery. Moreover, forming advisory or governing boards that include a diverse and representative group of stakeholders may be beneficial. These boards can offer guidance, feedback, and oversight, ensuring that the agency's organizational actions align with public needs and expectations.

The Future of Open Government

Winston Churchill is often attributed with the observation, “Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others.” This statement captures the essence of democratic governance – although it leaves much to be desired, it is the best we have to work with. Public administrators are all too familiar with the imperfections and challenges inherent in democratic systems. Yet, we also recognize its potential for progress and transformation. In a world where authoritarianism is on the rise, the principles of open government stand as a beacon of hope for strengthening democratic ideals. However, much like an authoritarian regime can hold sham elections to gain the veneer of legitimacy, open government tools can be used to give a facade of accountability without actually delivering on it,

thereby undermining the very principles open government is designed to uphold. To defend our democratic values, public administrators must be vigilant in pursuing genuine openness in governance, ensuring that open government tools are not just ticked boxes but impactful means of fostering democracy. Though imperfect, open government tools a commitment to transparency, participation, and accountability – foundational values for a democratic society.

In considering the future of open government, it is imperative to recognize that these practices should remain impartial and not be influenced by partisan politics. Open government should be a neutral platform that facilitates collective decision-making, transcending partisan ideologies. The core of open government lies in its ability to foster transparency, accountability, and participation, irrespective of the political spectrum. This neutrality is essential to ensure that open government tools are used effectively and fairly, serving the interests of all citizens and upholding democratic principles.

Our political system faces many challenges, such as addressing climate change and navigating the impacts of technological disruption. Simultaneously, extreme partisanship has made collective decision-making at the top extremely difficult. Open government has the potential to bridge these ideological divides and promote constructive dialogue. However, this potential can only be realized if public administrators are willing to embrace this challenge.

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