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Joshua Tauberer

Observing the Unobservables in the United States Congress

Our government is in a serious rut of gridlock. Gridlock is *the* biggest problem for public policy right now. Whether you want bigger government or smaller government, we need public policy to get us there. Congress is on track to pass the fewest number of laws this session in at least the last 30 years. And so in our field of civic technology, or hacking the law, this is one of the top problems we need to be trying to solve.

There's one small problem. That's all lies. Political reality these days is entirely manufactured. Calling Congress gridlocked presupposes the parties are even negotiating, and it's just not clear anymore that that's even true.

Manufactured reality has been a problem for quite some time. In a classic 1988 essay called Insider Baseball in The New York Review of Books, Joan Didion described a scene that was widely reported on during the '88 presidential campaigns. On a hot day that year, candidate Michael Dukakis stepped off an airplane and had a short baseball toss with his press secretary. You can imagine how that could be an iconic moment in a campaign. Again, this was apparently a widely reported on event. Except there was no ball toss. At best we could say a ball was thrown. It was a re-staging of a previous ball toss that hadn't been captured well by the media. The campaign knew it and decided to do it again. And the journalists knew it too. Didion wrote:

> What we had in the tarmac arrival with ball tossing, then, was an understanding: a repeated moment witnessed by many people, all of whom believed it to be a setup and yet most of whom believed that only an outsider, only someone too "naive" to know the rules of the game, would so describe it. . . . [T]his eerily contrived moment on the tarmac at San Diego could become, at least provisionally, history.'

The manufacturing of history is perverse and scary. And it happens regularly. Just last year, the public's view of the national debt negotiations was a hodge podge of fables told by the politicians involved. Remember how the Republicans asked for too much and President Obama moved the goal post? Reflecting on how the events were covered, reporter Matt Bai wrote:

> [A]fter the so-called grand bargain ... the two sides quickly settled into dueling, self-serving narratives of what transpired behind closed doors. ... [T]he whole debacle became the perfect metaphor for a city in which the two parties seem more and more to occupy not just opposing places on the political spectrum, but distinct realities altogether.

And last month in The New York Times there was this blog post about how campaigns are using data mining and another new techniques:

> [J]ournalists remain unable to keep up with the machinations of modern campaigns. . . . Over the last decade . . . campaigns have modernized their techniques in such a way that nearly every member of the political press now lacks the specialized expertise to interpret what's going on. Campaign professionals have developed a new conceptual framework for understanding what moves votes. It's as if restaurant critics remained oblivious to a generation's worth of new chefs' tools and techniques and persisted in describing every dish that came out of the kitchen as either "grilled" or "broiled."

What's being described is a world in which politicians are so far ahead of the public, and sometimes journalists, that they're able to construct whatever reality they want us to believe in. The worst part about *these* stories is that there's a level of complicity between the journalists and the politicians in retelling manufactured reality.

The politicians have a big advantage over the public. They've been doing what they do for longer than we have. They know their world better than we do.

But maybe we can data mine as well as the politicians can.

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They say that in good rhetorical style you're supposed to say what you're going to say, then say it, then say what you said. I'm already a few minutes in so it's past time for an overview slide. I began with how we can't see anymore exactly what's going on in Congress by traditional methods like asking politicians for a quote. So I'm going to describe three statistical analyses I've done on legislative data that lets us see through manufactured reality to what's really going on in our government. Those analyses are based on Google PageRank, Principle Components Analysis, and Logistic Regression. It'll be a little technical. There will be numbers and Python code. But only just enough to get you interested in trying out these techniques too, I hope. This is all a part of my website GovTrack.us, so I'll start first with some background on that project. And to wrap up I'll explain why this isn't about accountability.

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I was in college during the hay-day of peer-to-peer music sharing. My classmates at Princeton were building new music sharing tools on top of the campus's network infrastructure. My professors were conducting research on digital watermarks, and finding that watermarks were not very good at stopping file sharing. Things were looking up for free expression and creativity. Until my professors were threatened by the recording industry not to publish their unfavorable research results. One of my classmates was among the first four students to be sued by the recording industry for copyright infringement. All the while Napster and other peer-to-peer networks were being sued out of existence. The recording industry's response to music sharing felt harsh, at Princeton it was personal, and it motivated many of us there to use our technology expertise in the public policy sphere.

I was new to politics then. I hadn't yet voted in an election. But I had an idea. If we all knew a little bit more about what was happening in our government, we might actually hold our representatives accountable for just obviously stupid laws like those that turned listening to music into a legal affair.

So long story short, I built GovTrack.us. That was eight years ago. Today it is one of the most visited government transparency websites in the world, providing information on the status of legislation in Congress to a several million individuals each year. Here's what it looks like today.

You can find the status of every bill in Congress and get updates as bills move through the legislative process by email or RSS. You can read the text of bills and see how the text changes as bills are amended. You can find your representative with detailed congressional district maps, and you can get email updates and RSS feeds about what your representative is doing. The site actually has information on every bill since 1973 and every roll call vote in Congress since 1789, the first vote in our nation. The data behind GovTrack is open and powers a host of other legislative tracking and educational websites including OpenCongress and Sunlight Foundations's Scout.

We're pretty lucky actually that Congress puts a lot of information online. The best part of GovTrack is that the site pretty much runs itself. I've programmed the site to periodically go out to government websites and fetch the information they have on Congress. Screen scraping, as you probably know, is programmatically loading up web pages, looking at their HTML source, and extracting information using simple pattern matching. Screen scrapers are easily confused because there's no guarantee about how the information is going to look when it's not structured, and scrapers break easily when there are changes on the source website. GovTrack screen scrapes the Library of Congress's website THOMAS for bill status and puts it in XML. And in practice it's very accurate, not perfect, but as good as you're going to get for free.

Of course, Congress has an XML database of bills, and if I had that I wouldn't need to screen scrape THOMAS. I've been asking Congress for their database of bill status for eleven years now. This year there's actually the first sign of progress on that. The House Republican leadership formed a task force to discuss opening up the House's legislative data, and I'm told the task force is actually meeting. So we may see the House's half of Congress's legislative database soon. There's no word on whether the Senate has discovered computers yet, though.

GovTrack also pulls data from a few other sources, some in actually good data formats. The House and Senate publish roll call votes in XML --- that wasn't always the case. GIS data from the Census is used to create the district maps. The site also pulls data from GPO and other sources.

A lot of what GovTrack does is doing what the government is already doing, but better. Reading bill text, searching for bills, browsing roll call vote vote results. These are all things you can find on official websites. And in some cases I've just made it look prettier, or at least more understandable to people who aren't legislative professionals. But a lot of the site goes well beyond what the Library of Congress or the Senate and House clerks have a mandate to provide to the public, such as email updates and open data, and in some cases it does things with legislative information we might not even want the government to be doing.

When I started working on GovTrack.us in the early 2000's I thought the sort of transparency GovTrack would create could empower voters to make better decisions. I thought that showing how often representatives missed votes, explaining bill status, and cross-referencing bill status with the text of floor debates would increase accountability in a very direct way. We could vote out Members of Congress based on better information. But that doesn't really happen. It's taken me ten years to only begin to understand the problems in government that open legislative data *might* be addressing.

So for instance, here's how a bill becomes a law. This is a major simplification. In fact, I don't think anyone truly understands the whole process besides Congress's parliamentarians. This little cycle over here I find particularly interesting because it's something we're never really taught. The House and Senate can keep sending bills back and forth between the two chambers indefinitely if each chamber keeps amending the other's bill. The chambers have to pass the bill in identical form before the bill can move on to the president, and until that happens it's kind of like ping pong.

This type of diagram is called a finite state machine in computer science. FSAs have states, representing the different ways the world might be at any given time. For a bill, these states might represent the bill's status. Has it been voted on, did it pass or fail, was it signed by the president. And FSAs have arrows between the states showing the possible events that can occur that move the world from one state to another. A vote in the House is one such event that changes the state of a bill from floor debate to either passed in the House or failed in the House. There is no arrow from floor debate to passed-Senate-without-changes. It takes several steps to go from one state to the other, as the arrows show. An FSA is something like a flow chart.

These FSAs have many purposes in computer science. We can assign probabilities to the arrows between states to model how often events in the real world occur. On GovTrack I assign bills to one of about two dozen states as they move through the legislative process. Plotting the sequence of those states reveals the *actual* legislative process, as I've done here for House bills. On the next slide I zoom in on the left half of this diagram. Bills start in the 'introduced' state. From there they have a 9% chance of getting out of committee and a 4% chance of being passed before committee action. The remaining 87-ish% have no further actions. Once a bill gets out of committee, 77% are passed by the House, and so on through various other sorts of events until some bills are enacted.

FSAs with probabilities attached like this are called Markov Models, and we can use Markov Models to, say, predict the most common sequence of events that might occur. In this example, the most likely path is for a bill to, well, linger at the introduced state indefinitely until the bill is dead.

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But even this isn't really how Congress works. This is just what we can observe from the official record. What's really happening, simultaneously, is another set of events. Meetings with lobbyists. Negotiations. Planning meetings in each party's caucus. Fundraising. Meetings between the staffs of different Congressional offices. Secret holds. None of these are on the record. Most of these can't be observed by the public. If we really want to understand how Congress works --- and I mean, if we really want to track what's happening in Congress --- then we have to have some way of observing these unobservable events.

So I showed you a Markov Model. That's a finite state machine with probabilities. There's also something called a Hidden Markov Model. The idea here is that we don't know exactly what the process is or what the probabilities are, but we can see outputs, and from those outputs we try to infer what the underlying process actually is. Using these equations. Knowing that X% of bills pass from the official record might tell us something about the probabilities going on behind the scenes, such as the probability that a lobbyist meeting leads to a secret hold.

This is a model for how I think of the problem of civic engagement. The green states are *our* political reality. It's what we can see. It's the outmoded language of grilling and broiling. It's what we've got, but it's not good enough. We're not going to solve mathematical equations here. But I'm going to show you a few other techniques I've used to observe the unobservable.

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Congressmen and monkeys have a lot in common. But there's one way that Congressmen and monkeys differ. Monkeys have a code. If I scratch your back, you'll scratch mine. That's not always true in Congress. I can cosponsor your bill, but you might not cosponsor mine. This can tell us a lot. If I cosponsor a lot of your bills, it probably means we have some shared political beliefs. If you don't cosponsor any of my bills in return, it probably means I'm doing a little bit of tree hugging. And if it turns out you're also doing a lot of tree hugging, then it would seem I'm pretty low on the totem pole if I'm hugging a tree hugger. Looking at patterns of cosponsorship in Congress we can see who's doing the hugging and who's being hugged. And this sort of thing can be quantified into what I call a leadership score. The more people hugging you, and the more huggers they have, the higher your score.

So you may have heard of this site called Google. They invented PageRank. The more links you get to your website from other websites, and the more links those other websites have, the higher your PageRank and the higher up in search results you appear. That's how Google decides what order to show the search results in, and that method works really really well. Well that's the same mathematical model that I just described for quantifying leadership in Congress. And fortunately Google has worked out how to compute PageRank, and I've run the same procedure on cosponsorship in Congress.

Here it is in a nutshell. We look at how many bills each Member of Congress cosponsors of each other Member of Congress, and we put that into a matrix where the rows represent cosponsors --- Members of Congresss --- and the columns represent sponsors --- also Members of Congress. The value in each cell is the number of bills sponsored by one that were also cosponsored by the other. In this example, Congressman C cosponsored seven of Congressman F's bills. So you fill out this matrix for all of the House. There are 435 rows and 435 columns. Then we divide each row by the total in that row to give us percents. Of the bills Congressman C cosponsored, 20% were sponsored by Congressman F, and so on across the 435 sponsors. And then we just play a big game of hot potato using this matrix. I give every congressman a potato. In each round they pass off their potato to another congressman, based on how ofen they cosponsor their bills. So Congressman C would give his potato to Congressman F in 20 out of 100 rounds, and to other congressman according to the matrix. Or another way to do it is he gives up 20% of his potato to Congressman F each round, 10% of his potatoe to another congressman, and so on. If you set up the matrix right, this will eventually come to an end. Every congressman will eventually be giving up exactly as many potatoes, or fractions of potatoes, as he or she is receiving each round. Then their PageRank, or leadership score, is the number of potatoes they're holding in the end. And that's pretty much it, both for leadership and for Google PageRank.

Mathematically we're treating the cosponsorship matrix as a Markov Model. These are the same sort of probabilities as before. You can imagine arrows from every congressman to every other congressman with the same probabilities as indicated in the matrix. Multiplying out this matrix over and over again simulates passing the potatoes according to the Markov Model probabilities until we get a stable state where the number of potatoes each congressman holds no longer changes.

The numpy Python library makes coding this pretty easy. It's almost a two-liner to multiply the matrix. How many of you are familiar with matrix math? I'll step you through the code quickly. P is the

matrix that I showed you before. I'm not showing how that's assembled here. N is the size of the matrix, the number of congressmen. The first line creates a vector x of size N giving each Member of Congress an equal amount of potato to start with, here it's one-N'th of a potato. Then we multiply P by x, which gives us a new vector which says how many potatoes each congressman has after one round of hot potato. This is in a loop that we do indefinitely, until the change in potatoes is very small from iteration to iteration. There's some extra cruft in here to make sure that this program eventually does terminate. It's all based on the original PageRank algorithm --- I'll put up a reference a bit later.

Does it work? Well the congressman holding the most number of potatoes at the end is Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, the most senior Republican woman in the House by the length of her tenure. And the others in the top eight? Two are committee chairs and ranking members, one is a member of a party steering committee. It seems like it worked. Now if the results were obvious there'd be no point to this. So is there anything to learn here?

There are a few surprises in here. Rep. Ted Poe from Texas, a relative newcomer to the House compared to some of the others on this list (took office in 2005) and not a chair of any committee, ranks at number 7. Is this a bug in the algorithm, or does it mean Poe is a leader that no one --- at least no one outside of Capitol Hill --- has heard of. Well, I don't know! We'd have to look at the numbers to understand what this means. But numbers don't lie. There's something interesting going on with Poe.

And Rep. Paul Ryan, the so-called intellectual leader of the Republican party and now a VP candidate, is right about in the middle of his party. In this chart the leadership scores of congressmen are plotted on the vertical axis. Ryan is circled, he's in the middle. For someone called a leader, it's surprising he didn't end up with many potatoes.

That brings us to the horizontal axis of this chart.

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How else are Members of Congress like monkeys? Well like monkeys sometimes they act in groups. Here a group of monkeys have all decided to cosponsor bananas. Other monkeys are busy at another table cosponsoring seeds. In election years some monkeys cosponsor both bananas and seeds. What if you wanted to know the food preferences of moneys. You wouldn't go up to a monkey and ask him, or her, "Hello, Mr. Monkey. What kind of food do you like?". You'd observe.

The same is all true of politicians. It's no use asking them if they are bananas or seeds, liberal or conservative. Given the opportunity to talk, they'll just manufacture some new reality. We have to come to these conclusions by observing their behavior. There are a lot of was you can quantify a politician's record as liberal or conservative. Most ways involve comparing a politician to a benchmark. Benchmarks are usually someone else's positions on issues, like how the Sierra Club would have voted on a bill. Benchmarks are great but they usually only look at a small slice of the data.

This matrix can tell us more. This is the same matrix as before, where each cell is the number of times the Member of Congress for the row cosponsored a bill sponsored by the Member of Congress for the column.

Principal Components Analysis is a statistical technique that reveals underlying patterns in data like we have here. On a matrix like this, it turns every sponsor into a benchmark. Here I'm highlighting the fourth column, which is how often Members of Congress cosponsored Member D's bills. The first congressman cosponsored six of his bills. They're probably in the same party. The next three congressmen cosponsored zero, zero, and zero of his bills. Those congressmen are probably in the other party. There are more patterns here than just quantifying leadership. Members of Congress with similar political views will tend to cosponsor the same set of bills, or bills by the same set of authors, and inversely Members of Congress with different political views will tend to cosponsor other congressmen's bills.

Principle Components Analysis reveals the best sort of weighted average of sponsors that best separates Congress into two groups. It's like a new benchmark synthesized from every Member of Congress's complete record of cosponsorship. And it looks something like this. Some sponsors will be

excluded from the benchmark. They have zeros in their columns. Some Members have a positive weight, meaning they're on one side of the spectrum. Some Members have a negative weight, meaning they're on the other side. A technical term for these numbers would be an eigencosponsor. It's sort of an idealized Member of Congress who cosponsors all of the bills of the liberal Members of Congress and, for the negative weights, say, anti-cosponsors all of their bills. This is a sort of mathematical idealization of purely liberal or purely conservative congressional behavior.

It's entirely arbitrary whether liberal or conservative is positive or negative of course --- the matrix is blind to actual information like that. In fact, there's no guarantee that these numbers even have anything to do with liberal- and conversative-ness. All it tells us is how to separate Members of Congress into two groups, or more precisely how to spread them out along a spectrum in a way that explains their record of cosponsorship.

So now the final step is measuring how similar each Member of Congress is to the eigencosponsor. Some Members will match up more that others, some will look like the exact opposite when they do a lot of cosponsoring of the bills introduced by the negatively weighted sponsors. This comparison, to the eigencosponsor, is what I call the ideology score on GovTrack. Here's that plot again. The horizontal axis is this similarity to that eigencosponsor. The fact that blue is on the left is a coincidence, but that the blue and the red are well separated is a validation that this did something. The matrix that this started with again had no idea what party each column or row belonged to. But when we plot these new spectrum values and *show* the party, you can see the analysis did something, did something interesting. It split Members of Congress up into two groups, basically by their party, just from the matrix of cosponsorship.

Let's come back to this in a sec. I want to show you the code that produced the graph to convince you that this was possible, and not very difficult. As with the leadership scores, this code is short. It's literally two lines. We start with exactly the same matrix P again. Then we give it to the numpy library to compute the matrix's "singular value decomposition" or SVD. Every square matrix has a singular value decomposition. The magic is in how you interpret it. The SVD takes one matrix and gives you back three: called u, s, and v-transpose. And our ideology scores, the horizontal coordinate on the graph, is taken from the first or second row of the v-transpose matrix. This ideology variable is a vector of numbers, just like the original matrix P was full of numbers. Again, obviously, numpy has no idea what this matrix means. But we give the matrix an interpretation that's useful to us.

So again, did it work? Well, more or less. There's some overlap between the parties, and that's interesting. But first, let's look at the extremes. It shows Reps. Pete Stark and Doug Lamborn at the far edges of their parties. They're both known for being extreme. In February 2010, The National Journal named Lamborn the most conservative member of the House. So the analysis seems to be working so far. The Democrat closest to the Republican side is Rep. Dan Boren, from Oklahoma. According to Wikipedia, he serves on the board of directors of the NRA and he voted against Obamacare, so by these measures he is, indeed, pretty conservative for a Democrat.

There are other interesting things in this chart. There's a distinct V-shape. Congressional leaders appear to be more extreme than those who couldn't hold onto their potatoes. There are some confounding effects to consider here. Leaders tend to be more senior members of Congress, they tend to be older, and they have had more time to participate in legislating. But somewhere among those factors there's an interesting correlation to having an extreme political ideology.

And there is a lot more in this matrix than leadership and ideology. Who influences who? We could look a little deeper at cosponsorship to see who tends to copy other congressmen's cosponsorship patterns --- using the time associated with their cosponsorship. I hope to have more time to look at more analyses like this over the next few years.

Just some references. I owe the leadership idea to Joseph Barillari, who I knew in college.

These leadership and ideology scores give us a view into Congress that is normally hidden to us. We can't observe leadership. We're not there, in Congress, to see it. We're not in the meetings

where you can see relationships form. But those relationships are known to the congressmen and senators. It's obvious to them. They know whether they lead or follow. Their staff know. This is a sort of social knowledge that is locked within the institution of Congress, unless we get a little creative with how we try to observe it.

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Social knowledge isn't the only knowledge locked within the institution of Congress. There's also what you'd call typical institutional knowledge. How does a bill become law? It's so much more complicated than the Markov model I showed earlier, or the six status steps that I show on GovTrack. More than 10,000 bills will be considered in each session. About 4% will become law. Which ones should we focus on? Congressmen and senators know. Staff know. Lobbyists know. They have the institutional knowledge to recognize the needles from the haystack, and I bet often they're not even aware that they're using this institutional knowledge to do their jobs. We're at an enormous disadvantage on the outside. We don't know any of that. And as a result, we face a serious information overload.

Let's look at this bill, HR 2440. The Market Transparency and Taxpayer Protection Act, sponsored by Rep. Robert Hurt. There's a lot that GovTrack knows about a bill. It knows its title. It knows its sponsor and cosponsor. It knows whether they are Democrats or Republicans and what committees they sit on. It knows relationships between bills, between bills and committees. These are all factors that staffers know affect whether a bill has any chance of being in that 4% that will become law.

Right now, in the House, Republicans have the majority. Bills sponsored by the majority party are a few percentage points more likely to be enacted than bills sponsored by the minority party. This bill was referred to the House Committee on Financial Services. Well, the committee's chair, Rep. Bachus, is one of the cosponsors of the bill. Bills cosponsored by a chair of a committee that the bill is referred to are 8 percentage points more likely to be enacted than bills not cosponsored by a chair of a committee the bill was referred to. And having other cosponsors on that committee helps too. This bill has some other cosponsors on the committee, giving it another 2 percentage points advantage over bills that don't have as many cosponsors on the right committee. Congressional staff use this institutional knowledge regularly.

Earlier this year I created a statistical model of how likely a bill will be enacted based on these and other factors, around 50 factors in all, which I call a bill prognosis. The model was trained on bills from the 2009-2010 session of Congress, and I use it to generate an actual probability that a bill in the current session of Congress will be enacted. This bill's prognosis is 9%. Note that that's more than twice the overall rate of 4%. That signals to us, as otherwise totally uninformed observers, that this is a bill to pay attention to.

The prognosis model is based on a logistic regression. I won't get into the math here, except to say that it's a slightly more advanced version of a typical linear regression and is used for predicting probabilities. What the logistic regression provides is a way to combine many factors into a single probability, like the 9% for HR 2440.

For Senate bills, here are the top six factors that contribute most to a bill's chances of being enacted: If the title starts with the five words "A bill to designate the", then it has a 24% chance of being enacted. These are bills that name post offices and they get enacted far far more often than other bills. If the title starts with "A bill to authorize", it's a budget bill. The last one we saw before, a cosponsor is a chair of a relevant committee --- those are passed 9% of the time. Here are the three factors that contributed least to a bill's chances of being enacted. The sponsor is in the minority party. Only 1% of those bills are enacted. If the same bill was introduced in the last session of Congress and had no major action then, it's not likely to have any major action this time either. And lastly, if the title starts with "A bill to extend the temporary suspension of duty" --- those are special tax breaks --- those bills never get enacted.

Again, you'd know all this if you lived Congress. You'd know the factors and you'd have an idea of what those factors meant for a bill's chance of being enacted.

We don't know it. We have to guess what the factors are and then use statistical models to tell us which matter and which don't, and of those that matter whether they are good or bad for a bill, and how much. Not all of the factors that I threw at the statistical model came back as relevant. For instance, I checked if the sponsor having a high leadership score had any impact. It didn't, or at least not when committee chairmanships and other leadership-like factors are already considered. So while I threw at it about 50 factors, only about 20 were useful for Senate bills. And different factors are relevant in the House than in the Senate.

Did it work?

The bill was slated to be considered on the floor on September 19th. Not every bill is scheduled for consideration. This bill unfortunately never actually made it to the floor. I don't know why. But the 9% prognosis seems to have indicated something real. The bill already got further than most bills, but it has several major hurdles to go. We won't know possibly until early January when this Congress finishes whether the bill will have been enacted or not. At that point I'll look across the whole set of bills from this Congress to see how accurate the prognosis was.

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So let me now wrap up. I'm disappointed in politician who think reality is a game. But I won't accept that it's them versus us. Government is the people. We send the politicians to Washington. If we want better government, we have to build it. As "hidden" as our "markov goverment" is, as convoluted as legislative process has become, the onus is on us to figure it out. And the three tools I showed you --- PageRank, principle components analysis, and logistic regression --- help us see what's really going on.

These aren't tools of accountability per se. The point of the stories about manufactured reality wasn't that we should be distraught and throw up our arms and say government is corrupt and hopeless. It's that government, or better governance, is hard. We've built for ourselves a complicated system of government, and in the process raised the bar for the literacy we need to participate in it. I wish there was less spin in politics, and we should try to have less spin, but right now that's the way government works and, again, it's up to us to do better at participating in it.

If you ask me what the open government movement should be, it's not about accountability, or oversight, or rooting out corruption. Classic "open government" has been rooted in negativity that divides us from our government. We shame the elected officials that do wrong. We make them fearful of doing wrong. We motivate the public to reform government by making them more cynical by continually criticizing government. That's one way to approach problems in our government.

But it's not the fun way. I would rather see us build tools to empower and educate, to build an understanding of government and society that creates more efficient living and efficient markets, and finally that embraces creativity. Let's make government better not by making more people hateful of what we have but by having more people able and wanting to be involved in what we make.

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