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**WG3: Public Administration Reform in CEE and CA**

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Title **Open Government in Central Asia: Lessons for Developing Societies**

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**Abstract** Open government has long been regarded as a pareto-efficient policy – after all, who could be against such compelling policy objectives as transparency, accountability, citizen engagement and integrity? Using Kingdon's Multiple Streams Approach we draw on original empirical research and process tracking, to produce evidence to the contrary, demonstrating that open government policies can be (unintentionally) skewed by bureaucrats, and thereby promote policy interventions that bring about more closed, authoritarian government, rather than open, accountable government originally intended. Contrary to existing research this paper, which uses Kazakhstan as a case study of Central Asia, urges caution in the transfer of the open government agenda to authoritarian regimes.

Open government is a new policy idea which is now firmly on the policy agenda of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). It has emerged from the 'policy primeval soup' (Kingdon, 2003) of the wider improving good governance imperative in developing countries because of the very poor record of Central Asia on open government (OECD, 2017).

What is missing from the literature is attention to the composite role which open government might play in authoritarian states, in regions such as Central Asia, where its principles are often flouted. So, while there is research on individual elements of open government usually in single country studies [on e-government: Kneuer and Harnisch, 2016; Maerz, 2016; on citizen engagement: Kasymova, 2017; Denhardt et al, 2009; on civil society: Knox and Yessimova, 2015; and, on improving public services: Marat, 2016; Janenova and Suk Kim, 2016;], there is no research on the potential for officials to thwart the declared intentions of open government: building public trust and the improvement in government efficiency and effectiveness. To understand this we draw on Kingdon's multiple streams approach and its application to policy implementation.

