Government web portals are the formal public face of online government, yet their effectiveness and contribution to contemporary government is largely unknown. This paper conceptualises government web portals as spaces of administrative, policy and power contestation. Drawing on early findings of an Australian Research Council funded study examining the architectures, rationales, effectiveness and power effects of government web portals, this paper reports on the various shapes, structures and rationales of the top 10 e-government countries as ranked by the UN E-government Survey 2016: UK; Australia; Canada; USA; Korea; Finland; France; Netherlands; New Zealand; and Singapore. Data was obtained by utilizing hyperlink network generation, analysis and visualisation. A taxonomy of webportal design was identified: information referral portals focus on referring users to other websites (e.g. USA); information repository are designed to refer users to the large amounts of information within the portal (e.g. UK, Canada); interactive portals are ones in keeping with Government 2.0 principles (e.g. France); and historical portals include a large repository of past information (e.g. Netherlands). The paper concludes by articulating the potential strengths and weaknesses of such designs as they mesh with the machinery of government and user experience.

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