

Crowd sourcing alternatives to government data – how should governments respond?

Proposal for the Share-PSI 2.0 Timișoara Workshop: Open Data Priorities and Engagement.

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1 FOCUS

This session addresses the question of how public authorities can/should respond to community efforts to crowd source data that replicates official data that is not open (e.g. post code and address data). The session will start with a brief case study of how crowd sourcing initiatives of post code and address data in Sweden evolved, and the response by agencies. The session will also touch on data quality aspects of crowd sourcing initiatives.

2 RATIONALE

In many areas governments have a monopoly on high quality PSI, typically by regulation for its creation, maintenance and distribution. For types of data that are used in many scenarios, e.g. geodata, there may be a sufficient number of potential users that are excluded by expensive access to government data. In these areas crowd sourcing initiatives may be able to create alternative datasets that compete with those provided by governments.

There are already several initiatives, e.g. OpenStreetMap, that are good enough to make even large companies stop buying government data [1]. The outcome of these initiatives may disturb the market for government data while at the same time contribute to lower quality services given the data is not of the same quality as that from government agencies. Governments

need to find a way to deal with these issues in a way that serves society, but responses typically include legal action [2].

3 ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) Will/can crowd sourcing initiatives facilitate the publication of PSI?
- 2) What would be a reasonable response by government agencies when crowd sourcing initiatives compete with the government agency in the same data market?
- 3) Given that a data maintainer may have been turned into a corporation (e.g. the postal service) is it still possible to find ways to collaborate on data with crowd sourcing initiatives? How?
- 4) Is there a role for government to facilitate crowd sourcing initiatives of open data in areas not competing with government? How?
- 5) Will data reusers trust data from a crowd sourcing initiative?

REFERENCES

- [1] Swedens largest real estate classifieds site, Hemnet, switched to using OpenStreetMap for building outlines and open school data from the city of Stockholm: <http://www.hemnet.se/om/kartdata>
- [2] Swedish Post Cease and Desist Letter on Postcode initiative: <http://www.epsiplatform.eu/content/swedish-post-cease-and-desist-letter-postcodes>

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