

# The Road to Opening up Governmental Geospatial Data in Taiwan

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"Open Data" is the concept and practice of making datasets freely available to everyone. The data can be re-used, re-distributed, and re-published without restrictions. As much of the geospatial data produced by a government is essential information to its citizens, many consider it an important task to waive all intellectual property rights to governmental geospatial data. In the United States, the geospatial data produced by federal agencies is placed into the public domain. New Zealand and Australia also have similar policies to make their geospatial data available to the public. Although United Kingdom imposes Crown copyright in its public records, Ordnance Survey recently made several geospatial datasets available for re-use, distribution, and adaptation under its open data license. In many European countries, there are efforts to balance the needs of protecting public sector information (PSI) and the needs of citizens to access such information. Several countries started to release geospatial datasets via open licenses. For example, Dutch government released road, cadastre, postal code, and satellite image via the Creative Commons Attribution License.

The trends of open government and open data also reach Taiwan. Some Taiwan governmental agencies are starting to form strategies on open data. However, the incentives and decisions of governmental agencies in opening up public sector information often are complex and unclear; many of their considerations are inconsistent with those of open data practices and open government initiatives. The emphasis seems to be on data release strategies that derive "add-on value" from datasets they produce. Often there is no clear indication on whether the released datasets are free of all restrictions imposed by laws, copyrights, or other regulations.

We argue that the economic benefit of "open data" should not be calculated by the "add-on value" derived from the released datasets themselves, but from benefits and opportunities made possible in an open, transparent, and non-restrictive environment of data reuse. An integral statement on freedom about data reuse, such as the use of an open data license when releasing datasets, is fundamental to any open data strategy. However, currently no such integral statement or data license is used to release public sector information in Taiwan. The management of governmental geospatial data could be complicated because it involves many different agencies, acts, and regulations. Hence the first priority in opening up governmental geospatial data in Taiwan should be a high-level policy statement on waiving restrictions and controls from out-of-dated acts and laws, and on determining on what and when geospatial datasets should be opened up. In this study, we will first provide observations about recent developments on opening up governmental geospatial data in

many countries. We compare their open geospatial data strategies, and we will propose an appropriate policy guideline for Taiwan governmental agencies to open up their geospatial data.

**Keywords:** Geospatial data, Public Sector Information, Open Data, Open Government