

Opening Government Data through Mediation:

Exploring Roles, Practices and Strategies of (Potential) Data Intermediary Organisations in India

What is a 'Data Intermediary Organisation'? We identify a 'data intermediary organisation' as an organisation that **shares data** for its access, consumption and re-usage (including re-sharing) by **other organisations** and **individuals**.

Why is it important? We promote the idea of 'Data Intermediary Organisations' as agencies playing two crucial roles in an **open data ecosystem**: **#1 facilitating data access** for smaller and/or local organisations that may not have the capacity to work with large data sets; **#2 augment** and **amplify** the **circulation** of open data by **sanitising** and **curating** data coming from both **government** and **non-government** sources.

Are there 'Data Intermediary Organisations' in India? Not really, except a few **great exceptions**, such as **India Biodiversity Portal** and **India Water Portal**. However, the objective of this study is not to find existing Data Intermediary Organisations in India, but to understand: **#1** what all **prevent** them from existing; **#2** what the **implications** of their **absence** are; **#3** how they can be **created**.

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Policy Context **2008** Right to Information (RTI) Act; **2012** **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy** (NDSAP); **2013** **Implementation of Suo Motu Disclosure** under Section 4 of RTI Act.

Method **#1** Semi-structured interviews with (non-government) **organisations** working with **national-scale data** and (non-commercially) **sharing data** and **data products**; **#2** Semi-structured interviews with the **government agency** managing **Open Government Data Platform of India** <data.gov.in>.

How is Government Data Accessed in India?

Typically collected either from government agency **websites**, or physically collected from **government offices** (with and without fees). **Downloaded data** is either in spreadsheet, HTML table, or PDF formats. **Physically collected data** is either in paper form or in digital form (spreadsheets or database). **RTI request responses** usually come in paper form, and rarely in digital form. <data.gov.in> is not yet commonly used (by organisations interacted with) as they are **used to** downloading data **directly** from **websites** of government **agencies** concerned.

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How is Government Data Shared in India?

Almost all organisations interacted with in the study share government data in the form of **various data products** – analytical briefs, detailed reports, infographics (print and online), and materials shared with various user groups (media, policy makers, activist groups etc.). However, **very few** organisations **re-share** the sanitised and reorganised versions of the data. The reasons for not re-sharing are usually: **#1** **no** or **little demand** for **raw data** from potential re-users of data; **#2** **lack** of **confidence** in re-users' **capability** to '**correctly**' and '**objectively**' **interpret** and **use** the data; **#3** **lack** of **organisational culture** of re-sharing data, and **systemic difficulties** in creating that culture.

Key Challenges of Opening up Data in India

The critical task is **organising user communities** of (raw) data sets for both government data and data created and re-shared by non-government organisations. The challenge of building a **culture** of **contributing to open data ecosystem** exist both **within** and **outside government**.

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