Accessing, Opening & Using Government Data in Five Indian Cities

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The Project

- Thorough analysis of the National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP) introduced in January 2012 to further publication of government data in open and machine-readable formats

- Study the role of government and para-government bodies in implementing NDSAP

- Examine and evaluate how non-government and advocacy organizations are collecting data on the ground, and how RTI and NDSAP have influenced their data collection practices

- Assess how government agencies in cities are transitioning from paper-based systems to digitizing data

Open data in India: evolution and standpoints

Government

Efficiency in Administration

Computerization in government departments

E-governance

Computerization of land records

Digital delivery of services and records

Para-government agencies

Digitization

Digitize government department datasets

Provide IT capabilities

Engage with tech communities

Build applications with / on top of datasets

Open data in India: evolution and standpoints

RTI Activists	Open Data Advocates
Information for advocacy	Data for use and re-use
Access to information as a legally enforceable right	Access and digitize government data through sharing, purchase, hacking
Glean information from paper records	Build applications with datasets
Use information to enforce accountability among government officials and departments	Make data publicly available in machine readable and reusable formats
Use direct and indirect means to access data	Engage in forums, share experiences, network, access data

Open data in India: challenges

Unclear copyright frameworks

Lack of clean and machine-readable datasets

PDF legacy from the early days of computerization

Lack of IT capability within govt. departments

Adherence to open source technology and standards as posturing

No enforcement powers under NDSAP

Opening information tied to each govt. department's status

NIC only has persuasive powers

Opening data is ultimately about each department's willingness and ability

Genuine adherence to open source technology and standards but no connection with tech communities

NDSAP:
objectives and institutional location

* Development of a data portal – http://data.gov.in – to share datasets which have been created by central government ministries **using open standards** but **not necessarily under open licenses**

* Objective: "facilitate access to GoI-owned shareable data and information in human and machine readable forms through a network across the country in a proactive and periodically updatable manner"

* Primary stakeholders: Department of Science and Technology (DST), Department of Electronics and IT, NIC, Ministry/Departments/Offices/ Organizations

* Scope: only central government departments are covered under NDSAP. State governments can customize and adopt NDSAP based on their contexts

NDSAP:
mandate and effectiveness

✤ The Ministry/Departments/Organizations must **nominate a nodal officer**, known as **data controller**, whose primary task is to lead open data initiative in the concerned department, identify high value datasets and schedule release on data.gov.in. S/he must also ensure compliance with NDSAP and establish a NDSAP cell in the department

✤ NDSAP has asked departments to submit 'negative lists' indicating what kinds of data they will not release

✤ NDSAP has directed all central government agencies to publish five "high-value datasets" within three months of policy notification

✤ After more than a year of notification, data.gov.in has 400+ datasets from 13 government agencies

✤ A significant feature of NDSAP implementation has been the role of National Informatics Centre (NIC) to actively seek and promote interaction with open data communities

NDSAP:
political and governance context

* NDSAP has a curious political position: on the one hand, it is connected to the RTI Act and to people's movements for transparency. On the other hand, it is connected to a broad administrative reforms agenda for embracing e-governance

* Government agencies in India are about to adapt to a new digital data culture where networked IT-based solutions are deployed to raise service delivery efficiency

* Simultaneous collaborations and conflicts with IT and web-based media companies is also a sign of an uncertain but quickly changing policy and regulation environment

* NDSAP connects both: the concerns of an older generation of transparency movements as well as emerging issues of openness in a networked, data-driven state

Objectives of the Research

We will focus on the following questions:

* Is the focus on born-digital and digitized data relevant for a government data policy in India?

* How do different organizations negotiate with legal restrictions regarding accessing and/or sharing government data?

* What primary and secondary data collection exercises do organizations undertake in order to replace / augment government data? How are such datasets are managed and circulated?

* How will NDSAP tackle paper-based legacy systems of government data management? Do such plans affect advocacy and research initiatives?

Research Methods

* Archival research: policy documents, parliamentary discussions on RTI Act and NDSAP, policies and position papers on e-governance initiatives and standards

* Interviews with government officials directly and indirectly associated with developing / implementing NDSAP

* Interviews with civil society actors using RTI and/or open data approaches for retrieving / using geospatial data, property records and land use information, sanitation and health data, and electoral data

* Interviews with government officials in the chosen five Indian cities

* Consultation workshop with government officials and civil society actors on research findings

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