

EDS 220 – HW 4 Task 1

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1. Reflecting on your personal or professional background, how might sociopolitical factors shape the availability and interpretation of satellite and other remotely sensed data for communities or organizations you're familiar with?

Remotely sensed data from satellites are incredibly difficult and expensive to design, launch, and maintain, which means that each satellite is created with a specific agenda—some of which may not be fully disclosed to the public. In the U.S., the Freedom of Information Act provides access to some satellite data developed with taxpayer money, but these satellites are often designed to serve American political interests. As a result, higher-quality data tends to be available for regions of interest to the U.S., creating imbalances in global coverage. Satellite imagery also raises significant privacy concerns, so users (like us) must take care not to generate or share information that could compromise any individual's privacy/identity. In my professional and academic experience, it's become obvious that less developed nations and regions with more cloud cover have much lower-quality satellite imagery, further creating an imbalance in global coverage.