

A Critical Discussion on Open Government Initiatives: Position of Turkey

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Abstract—Open data policies at the local level are relatively new and most cities are still learning by doing. It is important that those cities considering open data initiatives learn from other cities that have implemented programs, so as to avoid the problems and mistakes that other cities have encountered along the way. This article attempts to provide the recent literature and applied cases through OGP and a critical discussion on the position of Turkey.

Keywords—open government, information age, information society, urban planning, social innovation

I. INTRODUCTION

The 21st Century is recognized as the era of a substantial transformation from “data” to “knowledge” for achieving better quality of life, both socially and economically. As with a whole range of leading issues, cities are placed at the center of this shifting environment where the importance of open data is recognized. Through smart use of data measurement, analysis, and socio-economic activity, open data will further solidify the centrality of cities in this urban century.

The objective of this paper, first a cross-section analysis of the recent trends on “open government initiatives” around the world will be provided from an urban planning perspective. Second, the current position of Turkey will be explored through the 10th Development Plan in the Information Age in order to understand the potential path for open governments.

II. TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR PLANNING IN THE INFORMATION AGE

A. Information Society and the New “Citizen”

The issue of technology and its role in contemporary society have been discussed in the scientific literature using a range of concepts including information economy, post-industrial society, network society or information revolution. Although the major criticism underlies if there is a real difference between the new society and the preceding ones, a consensus also exist on the new forms of social interaction through technology. Furthermore, such ways of knowledge transfer among the community rises a general public awareness on social, cultural, economical and physical attributes of the neighborhoods and cities. Citizens of the new era are thus more capable of sending and receiving information from anywhere and at any time,

which result in need of new types of knowledge and public services. Furthermore, information economy centralizes the value and production of knowledge where experts and knowledge resources are as critical as other economic resources. Unlike most resources that are depleted when used, information and knowledge can be shared, and actually grow through application. For this reason, human capital and its competencies are key components of value in a knowledge-based economy. Similarly, one should note that these characteristics of the new era require new ideas and approaches from policy makers, urban managers, planners and knowledge workers. Furthermore, such information workers are generally considered as “urban entrepreneurs” who attempts to look for innovative solutions against the challenges of the new era and create “value”.

B. Urban Innovation: Multi-dimensional structure

“Urban Innovation” is about finding new ways to address challenges faced by cities and urbanites. In the new economy, the creation of new ideas can be regarded as “goods or commodity” reached through a vast volume of data and information produced within the cities by the society. However, not every segment of the community is capable of accessing the information and transfer it into a value. Within this framework, the role of cities become central in defining and supporting a strong and sustainable “information eco-system” where new values are created. Thus, urban innovation thrives when it is supported by an ecosystem of public, private and non-profit actors working together to create an environment that is conducive to innovation and entrepreneurship at the urban scale.

Although a vast majority of the literature and current applications focus on technological dimension of the urban innovation, recent approaches recognizes the significance of other dimensions such as “social”, “ecological” and “economic” innovation. Social innovations are new strategies, concepts, ideas and organizations that meet the social needs of different elements which rise due to the health, living, education, working and similar conditions. Generally, the exchange of ideas and values creates the key mechanisms of this type of urban innovation where value created accrues primarily to society rather than to private individuals.

Next, ecological innovation is the development of products and processes that contribute to sustainable development, applying the commercial application of

knowledge to elicit direct or indirect ecological improvements. This includes a range of related ideas, from environmentally friendly technological advances to socially acceptable innovative paths towards sustainability.

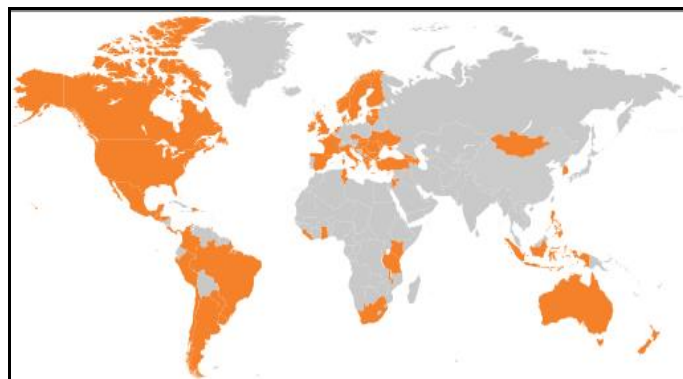
Finally, economic innovation is a growing economic theory that emphasizes entrepreneurship and innovation. In knowledge-based economy, growth is not based on capital accumulation, but rather innovative capacity spurred by appropriable knowledge and technological externalities. Economics growth in innovation economics is the end-product of knowledge such as tacit knowledge; regimes and policies and systems of innovation that create innovative environments (i.e., clusters, agglomerations, metropolitan areas).

III. OPEN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES AROUND THE WORLD

In the information age, citizens are demanding higher levels of transparency from their governments. According to a survey conducted by Lake Research Partners and The Topos Partnership (2009), making U.S. government more accountable (83%) and more open (79%) are among the greatest concerns of the citizens. Governments are responding by proactively publishing their information in the so called open data movement. In this environment, several large- and medium-sized cities across the US have implemented open data programs and many are considering doing so in the future. The “Open Government Initiative” is an effort by the United States to “creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government.” The philosophy of the initiative is that the government should be transparent, participatory and collaborative. The directive starting this initiative was issued on January 20, 2009. Continually, “Open Government Partnership (OGP)” launched on September 20, 2011 when the founding eight governments of Brazil, Indonesia, Philippines, Mexico, Norway, South Africa, United Kingdom, and United States formally adopted the Open Government Declaration and announced their national action plans (NAPs). Since then, the partnership has grown to 69 countries representing a third of the world’s population (Map 1.1). Participating governments have made over 2,000 commitments to be more open and accountable to their citizens. OGP participating countries operate on a two-year NAP calendar cycle, in which there are no gaps between the end of the last action plan and the beginning of the new one. This means every country will be implementing a NAP at all times, although individual commitments still vary in length. In order to achieve this, countries will draft their new NAPs during the last six months of implementation of the previous NAP. All NAPs should cover a period of implementation of a minimum of 18 months, although individual commitments may vary in length.

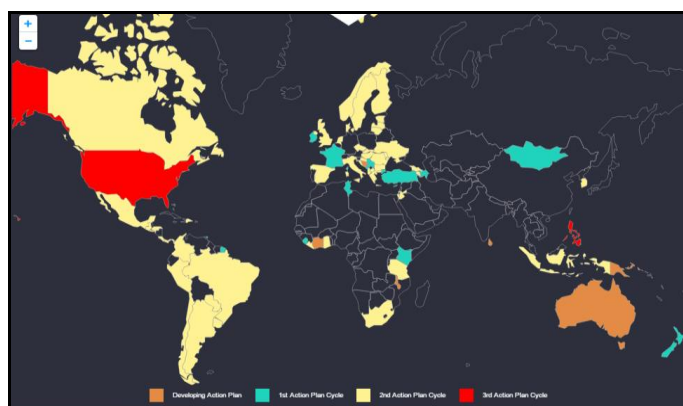
By 2016, participating countries have been categorized into four status level with respect to the “two-year NAP calendar cycle”: 1) developing action plan, 2) 1st action plan cycle, 3) 2nd action plan cycle and 4) 3rd action plan cycle. According to Map 1.2, only two countries (USA

and Philippines) have been considered within the third cycle of its own NAP procedure.



Map 1.1: OGP Participating Countries

(Source: http://www.opengovpartnership.org/sites/default/files/attachments/leaflet_web.pdf)



Map 1.2: OGP Participating Countries: two-year NAP cycle

(Source: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/countries>)

The open data movement is a new phenomenon in local government and most cities are still learning by doing. It is, therefore, important that the cities considering open data initiatives learn from the example of those taking the lead, to avoid problems or mistakes that other cities have encountered along the way. Similarly, in Europe, the release of government data in open formats is governed by a recent EU-directive concerning the public sector information, called the “PSI-directive”. Together, the different perspectives on open data and open government and the large number of global actors striving for consensus makes opening government data a rather complex story.

From a sociological perspective, it is important to recognize that two movements with overlapping perspectives influence the current realisation of opening data. “The Right to Information Movement (RTI)” has a long history and is concerned with transparency as a civic right, which leads to decreased government secrecy and reduced corruption. Meanwhile, the “Open Government Data Movement (OGD)” draws on transparency as a means to create new services and innovations in combination with and based on technology enabled

participation. Both movements strive for access to government data and information in digital forms; however, the RTI movement mostly uses Freedom of Information Laws (many similar regulations exist around the world) as the bases for argumentation while the OGD movement tends to rely on more recent open data directives.

Consequently, the concept of “Open Government” is increasingly popular around the world and is often used as a buzzword for the on-going extension of e-government that enables new ends and new means to facilitate an open culture that leads to transparency, participation, and collaboration. It is stated to be an ICT-driven openness that results in the publication of data in digital formats under the label ‘open data’. Practitioners suggest that open data have greatly influenced the way the public sector interacts with citizens, the way innovation is created, and by who citizen services are created. Therefore, it bears strong influences from other crowd-based open movements such as open source and open access.

IV. G8 OPEN DATA CHARTER

Upon the adoption of the “Open Data Charter” at the June 2013 G8 Summit in Lough Erne, Northern Ireland, Canada and all other G8 members agreed to implement a set of open data principles and best practices that will lay the foundation for the release and reuse of government data before December 31, 2015. Through this Charter, countries agreed that open data are an untapped resource with huge potential to encourage the building of stronger, more interconnected societies that better meet the needs of our citizens and allow innovation and prosperity to flourish. The principles of the Charter are listed into five categories:

1. Open Data by Default
2. Quality and Quantity
3. Useable by All
4. Releasing Data for Improved Governance
5. Releasing Data for Innovation

While working within each national political and legal frameworks, the G8 countries have also agreed on implementing these principles in accordance with the technical best practises and timeframes set out in each country’s national action plan. G8 members have decided to develop action plans, with a view to implementation of the Charter and technical annex by the end of 2015 at the latest (Table 1.1 shows a general list of national action plans by 2016)

Table 1.1. National Open Data Action Plans of G8 Countries

Country	National Action Plan
Japan	Data – Go.JP (Open Data Initiative)
Canada	Open Canada
USA	Open Government Initiative –
Italy	Transparency International Italy
France	ETALab-Open Government National Action Plan

United Kingdom	UK Open Government Network
Russia	Not signed the agreement

A. Case Studies: Open Stockholm, Open Canada, Open Government Initiative/White House

In this section, three case studies of open government will be summarized: Sweden, Canada and USA.

1) *Open Stockholm*: Stockholm City is the largest municipality in Sweden with more than 860,000 habitants covering the capital city of Sweden. It is characterized by a continuous growth in both population and business life, which has led to a growing need for public transport, enhanced city infrastructure, and housing. In the mid-90s, Stockholm was considered an international centre for ICT-innovation, a legacy that has influenced their current aim of making Stockholm a forerunner in IT-innovation and digital cities. The strategic IT-management group of five people and two external advisors, representing regional business life and developer community, started discussions about opening up data in 2009. In early 2012, they launched their open data initiative Open Stockholm (Figure 1.1.) with a hackathon focused on mobile applications and business ideas. The initial drivers for opening data were as follows:

- 1) to regain the international position as an IT-innovation centre,
- 2) to enable a vision of a digital city,
- 3) to increase service and transparency for citizens,
- 4) to deal with practical problems relating to their increasingly growing city. Hence, it is the vision of a modern and digital city, rather than the Swedish PSI-initiative, that is highlighted as the driving force for Open Stockholm. However, the arrival of the Swedish PSI-law triggered the start of their process by addressing the challenges of their growing city such as moving of the people, increasing level of construction and traffic problem.

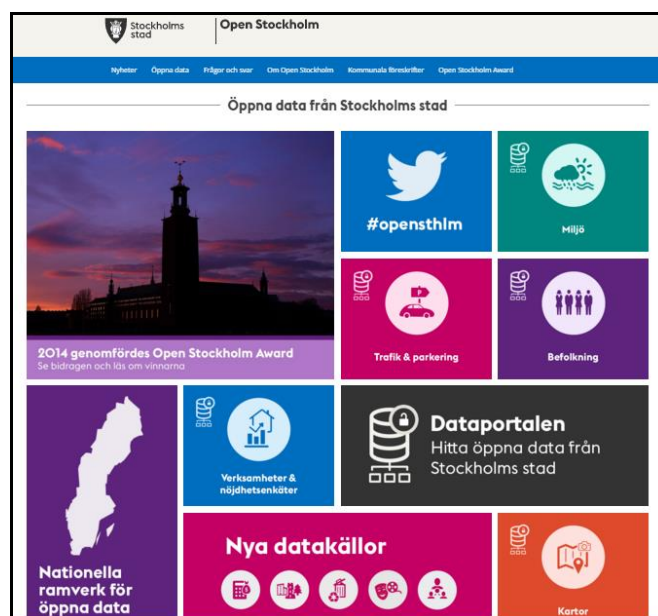


Figure 1.1. Open Stockholm Initiative – web page
(Source: <http://open.stockholm.se/>)

For the process of releasing data, strategic management's decision was based on two criteria: the selected data would be quick and easy to release and it should address the citizens; primarily developers and companies. During the process of opening the data, it was not only technically skilled people and companies who revealed an interest in open data, citizens also made requests for the release of planning documentation for local building projects because they wanted to influence those projects that were close to their neighbourhoods.

Transforming the selected data into formats that citizens could download and use easily, which, in this case, clearly related to developers, was considered a major challenge for the municipality. Once this challenge was solved, the data were published on a portal in different formats for different types of data

In summary, Stockholm attributed the core meaning of open data as a platform for techno-economic growth, which can be described as when public sector data is released in open formats, the digitalisation will spur new innovations and services that will lead to the creation of economic value and improved competitiveness for the region. It should be noted that aspects other than the techno-economic perspectives were seen, such as the recognition of transparency and democracy, but they were marginalised when it came to making decisions and performing activities.

V. POSITION OF TURKEY WITHIN THE OPEN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE

In 2011, Government of Turkey has accepted to join the Open Government Initiative and develop its national action plan. As of 2016, the status of Turkey locates within the first cycle of NAP development where an action plan has been developed, provided as a document and uploaded on the OGP Platform. According to this document, Turkey has following objectives:

- 1) Information sharing with the public,
- 2) Active participation of citizens, non-governmental and private sector organizations,
- 3) Increasing public awareness.

With regarding share of information: the objective is to share public-sector-produced information as much as possible as utilizing contemporary technological possibilities and mass media. Transparency of all public processes and accessibility to information through websites and digital platforms are scheduled in 2011 to be operational for future. However, when the suggested web sites of the NAP document are checked as of 2016, it is observed that none of the digital platforms have been structured yet.

For the active participation of citizens, the aim is to increase the level of public participation in policy making and implementation processes. For example, during the preparation phases of laws and other regulatory processes, the information is planned to be shared with the public

over a uniform digital platform. However, since 2011 such platforms could not have been structured.

The third target of Turkish NAP is to increase public awareness through organizing workshops, seminars and conferences with the participation of all stakeholders. In the document, it is declared that this method would ensure both increasing public awareness and an opportunity to express exchange views which would help shape the process.

A. Current Status of Science, Technology and Innovation in Turkey:

Both current literature and recent trends around the world implies the success of open government initiatives depends on both socio-economic and technical capital abilities of a nation. Within this consideration, current status of science, technology and innovation in Turkey will be summarized as follows:

- Through previous policies that target strengthening the science, technology and innovation capacity, one can state that the funds allocated to R&D and the number of researchers has increased along with R&D activities, expenditures, and researcher employment of the private sector. Research infrastructures at universities, public institutions and private sector were further developed. However, although R&D intensity of Turkey increased from 0.60 percent to 0.86 percent between 2006 and 2011, it is still behind the 2 percent target of the Ninth Development Plan and the EU average of 1.9 percent. In the same period, the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) researchers was targeted to be 80,000 and reached 72,000 in 2011. Number of FTE researchers per 10,000 people was 30 in 2011 which was below the EU average of 70.3 as 2010.
- In 2011, the share of private sector in the total R&D expenditures was 43.2 percent and 48.9 percent of FTE R&D personnel were employed by private sector. R&D incentives, developments in Technology Development Zones (TDZ) and incentives for establishing R&D centers contributed to the rise in private R&D activities.
- Number of TDZs, their projects and researcher employment, together with R&D and innovation support programs led by public institutions including the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TÜBİTAK) and the budget allocated for these programs has increased and the projects were determined in line with technological priority areas. In 2010, Turkey was in the 18th place in terms of the total number of scientific publications globally. However, in terms of the publications per capita its ranking was 45th in the world and Turkey placed at the lower end of the EU rankings in terms of average citation. This indicates the need for improvement of research environment especially in basic sciences and enhancement of the qualifications and quantity of researchers.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are two groups of factors to consider when evaluating an open data policy: those factors that must be defined when launching the policy (background factors); and those factors that will be defined along the way (the on-going factors). Careful consideration of the background factors provides the legal, budgetary, technical and organizational foundation of an open data analysis on which to build effective policy. Consideration of the other on-going factors, such as stakeholder engagement and the selection and release of available data, will contribute to increasing the social and economic value of the policy.

Literature on open data policy analysis is scarce, therefore, the best way to better understand the inherent opportunities and challenges involved may be to analyze the real life successes of cities that have instituted open data programs. Through the analysis of case examples, different alternatives may be compared, trade-offs may be confronted, and useful insights may be gleaned by decision-makers. Not surprisingly, the quality of outcomes from an open data initiative is directly dependent upon the investment made in policy analysis and development.

Cities must respect and safeguard the identities and privacy rights of citizens when sensitive information is contained in open data releases. Many cities already have such protections in place. When making a decision about what data to share, a city should consider the ways in which an individual might be identified by the information that is provided. Actions should then be taken to ensure that citizens' identities and privacy rights are protected in accordance with the law.

When the current position Turkey is analyzed, it is observed that there is still a vast amount of challenges on the path of open data and government. First, in order to generate more value added in services and agriculture besides industry, to develop innovative entrepreneurship and to stimulate regional potential, implementing science, technology and innovation policies as complementary to other policy areas particularly education, industry and regional policies is important.

In R&D and innovation area, it is necessary to enhance the accreditation and standard setting capacity at

international levels, to provide effective and sustainable use of research infrastructures via their diversification and to foster more cooperation among public and private sector. There is a need to enhance the human resources in terms of quality and quantity and to increase their employment in the private sector. Moreover, it is still important to develop regional and international cooperation, especially with the EU countries, in R&D activities, research infrastructures and research labor force.

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