

# THE NEXT GENERATION OF LOCATION-BASED SERVICES

## Open Data Opportunities



The advent of web technologies and the promotion of data sharing practices have fostered open data initiatives. The main motivation of governments in sharing data with the public is to stimulate economic growth by enabling the creation of new products. One of the areas that could benefit from open data initiatives is that of location-based services (LBS). If access to relevant data sources is granted, next-generation LBS could do much more than “just” proposing an itinerary from A to B, or finding the nearest hotel. However, challenges must be addressed before open data initiatives can result in expected benefits.

Whether the aim is to boost business performance, understand interactions between environmental phenomena or make strategic political decisions, access to information is a critical asset. Public organisations and agencies generate and store volumes of data

related to a large variety of domains, including environment, health, topography, demographics, public service, sociology, economy, etc. Up until recently, governments used to keep their data assets in locked relational databases that could only be accessed by designated officials. Nowadays, web technologies – and also the emerging collective awareness of the potential of these data assets – are challenging this practice.

Several governments have engaged in open data initiatives by making their data available to the public, mostly through web portals. Scholars describe open data as a new data management approach whereby various users can access, organise and reuse non-sensitive information for different purposes than the originally intended one. One example of an open data initiative is the US portal, Data.gov. The initiative is said to be based on principles of transparency, citizen participation to public policies and practices, and collaboration.

### Fostering Economic Growth

Nevertheless, one of the main motivations for open data initiatives is economic. By sharing their data, governments aim to foster economic growth, whereby the information they hold may have economic value to businesses and may support the creation of new, value-added products. Europe’s Public Sector Information (PSI) Directive is also aligned with this aim. According to a meta-analysis of existing research on the economic impact of PSI in Europe commissioned by the European Commission, the overall direct and indirect economic gains generated by PSI are estimated at EUR140 billion. In the non-market sector, the more extensive use of PSI is also expected to generate significant gains in terms of social benefits and contribution to social programmes. Asia is also following the trend with, for example, Singapore’s Data.gov.sg portal which was launched in 2011 to serve as a first-stop gateway to publicly accessible government data.

In 2012, more than 6,000 datasets were provided through Data.gov.sg. It is estimated that, by the end of 2011, datasets from the portal had enabled the development of more than 30 e-service applications.

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