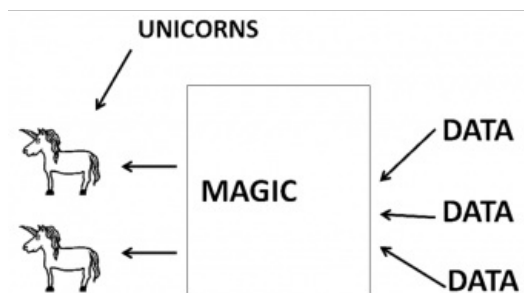


# SDI: Think ‘Adaption’™ and ‘Cultivation’™ Rather than ‘Construction’™



While recent advances in geospatial technologies offer great promise, the specifics of whether and how data and information are used too often remain a black (magic) box; spatially enabled decision-makers are a bit like idealised unicorns. Without a keen knack for navigating political and administrative influences, spatial enablement can at times seem like the stuff of magic and unicorns – a fantasy. Simply creating and providing useful information does not mean that it will be used, or used wisely. Similarly, a ‘partnership framework’ for spatial data infrastructure (SDI) can seem like a mythical item.

Harold Seidman, a 20<sup>th</sup>-century public administration scholar, likened the quest for effective inter-agency coordination to the mediaeval search for the philosopher’s

stone....“If only we can find the right formula for coordination, we can reconcile the irreconcilable, harmonise competing and wholly divergent interests, overcome irrationalities in our government structures, and make hard policy choices for which no one disagrees.”

Thankfully, GSDI members – Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation, University of Twente [1] and KU Leuven—University of Leuven [2] – conduct interdisciplinary and longitudinal research that is advancing our understanding of the geospatial data ecosystem. These institutions grapple with complex issues affecting data collection, data sharing and interoperability – namely, adaptation and cultivation. Both are co-authors of papers in the recently published special issue on innovative geoinformation tools for governance in the *ISPRS International Journal of Geo-Information* [3].

One paper, entitled ‘Evolving Spatial Data Infrastructures and the Role of Adaptive Governance’, emphasises the importance of having a mixture of governance approaches to support inter-agency coordination. The authors found that central governments are simultaneously expanding their ability to steer, while still enabling dialogue and participation. Another paper, entitled ‘Tensions in Rural Water Governance: The Elusive Functioning of Rural Water Points in Tanzania’, shows the significance of a cultivation approach, which allows for improvisation. The authors stress that the development of administrative, financial and computing technologies best not be viewed as a well-defined process with pre-configured start and end states; unforeseen consequences and drift from the expected are inevitable. Both papers are open access, and GSDI encourages the geospatial community to take a look.

[1] Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation, University of Twente, [www.itc.nl](http://www.itc.nl)

[2] Public Governance Institute, KU Leuven—University of Leuven, <http://soc.kuleuven.be/io/english>

[3] Special Issue on innovative geoinformation tools for governance  
[http://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijgi/special\\_issues/geoinformation\\_governance](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/ijgi/special_issues/geoinformation_governance)