

Unlocking the Value of Public Sector Information

Rufus Pollock
University of Cambridge

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Why Here, Why Now?

In the 21st: Information

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Code, Content, Data ...

Information is Ever Increasing in Importance

- Many businesses built on processing and analysing info
 - E.g. search engines
 - E.g. financial services (banks, insurance etc)
- Crucial even to those that don't depend on it directly
 - How many businesses *don't* need some
 - geospatial/weather/... info
- Average citizen too!
 - Transport planning
 - Democratic participation
 - ...

Production and Distribution of Information in the Knowledge Economy

Public Sector Controls Some of the Key 'Utilities' of that Economy

Core info sets: legal, geospatial, meteorological,
socioeconomic ...

What Questions Do We Face?

The Questions

For *digital, upstream and non-personal* PSI:

1. Who should pay to create + maintain it?
 - Should information be free to users?
2. What regulatory structure should support this?

TO MAXIMIZE *TOTAL* SOCIAL WELFARE

1. Who Should Pay

Three Options:

1. Government: fund from general government revenues
2. Updaters: charge those who make changes to the dataset(s)
3. Users: charge those who use the dataset(s)

Generally, should:

- Fund via option 1 + 2
- Charge users at marginal cost (≈ 0 for digital data).
- Updater charges esp. attractive (where possible ...)

Governance and Regulation

- Needed WHATEVER charging policy you do
 - Cost-recovery is not any 'better/easier' than marginal cost
- Require Governance/Regulation that is:
 - Transparent (for Competition)
 - Independent (for Commitment and Competition)
 - Empowered (for Effectiveness)
 - A single clear source of authority and responsibility
 - Often not clear who's in charge ...
- Governance/Regulation isn't rocket science
 - Relatively cheap and huge benefits
 - Can look to experience over last 20 years with telecoms etc
 - First steps: proper detailed accounts, proper transfer pricing etc

Conclusion

We are Living in the Information Age

Threshold of a new era

Already: prominence of
pure info companies,
Google etc

To Unlock the Power of Public Information

Make bulk (upstream) data
OPEN

Free to use and reuse

To Make this Happen

- Charge updaters or pay from general govt funds
 - Charging updaters may be 'politically' easier
- Need better governance/regulation
 - Government has an unusually central role:
 - Supplier, User, Policy-maker, ...
 - Key to 'getting it right'