Making it Count:
Big Data, the Open Revolution and Public Engagement

Monday 24 February 2014 • 9:15 – 4:30 | Dexter House, Tower Hill, London

Introduction

Mobile technology, as it grows smaller, cheaper and more capable, is making crowd sourced and local data collection efforts more feasible. Coupled with the ongoing concern of the need for democratic accountability that has shaped so much of the global development agenda, this technology has given rise to opportunities and expectations for research data to offer exciting new levels of civic participation.

The Open Government Partnership, which will have 62 signatory countries by April 2014, acknowledges that data sharing is a key to more-effective government.

The UN-convened High Level Panel's recommended framework for the successor to the Millennium Development Goals also reflected the growing demand for public accountability and the opportunities of new technologies. They would like to see research data used to provide better monitoring than was the case with the MDGs, but they also see this data as offering an opportunity to deliver increased equity. In effect, they call for a data revolution.

The challenge

Fundamental to this new project of data openness is the role of 'intermediaries' or brokers — those who not only facilitate awareness of and stimulate demand for data by the public, but who occasionally also make this data mapping and crowd sourcing possible. This means non-proprietary data and news coverage are vital to the success of these global policy initiatives.

Here, in spite of some eye-catching success stories, there are a number of challenges, particularly with data-driven reporting:

- Governments, corporations and NGOs have to be persuaded to share data;

- Journalists and technical enthusiasts have to be coaxed out of their comfort zones to integrate data projects into their day-to-day work;

- The audience demand for quality analysis has to be understood and turned into a serviceable product;

- Communities of citizens need to be able to access, interrogate and, crucially, act upon the findings;

- Data literacy remains a major barrier to widespread adoption of data journalism.

This meeting will explore how we can increase research and communication agencies' effectiveness in overcoming these challenges for the data revolution and open-access era of public administration.

Meeting objectives

☑ The meeting will map the challenges to increasing public engagement with research data.

☑ It will seek to identify promising social and technical innovations offered by agencies that might redress some of these challenges.

☑ It will aim to facilitate partnerships and networking across the sectors that need to collaborate to make this data revolution effective and sustained.

☑ It will seek to articulate policy recommendations.

What to expect

The meeting will feature two keynote speakers covering the issues from the perspectives of research institutions and communication agents.

There will be six case studies presented to facilitate discussion around key issues and an exhibition space for programmes and data platforms to showcase their work.

The closing plenary will be preceded by an Open Space session to offer the opportunity for emergent ideas and collaborations.

Sci Dev Net