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A Study of the Development and Distribution of Open Geospatial Data in Japanese Local Governments

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Abstract

Since the end of the last decade, the use of open data (secondary use and machine-readable formats) has emerged as a political and cultural movement for the realization of citizen participation. Open government, citizen participation, transparency in government affairs, and cooperation of public and private entities were established as goals by the Obama administration in the U.S. in 2009. In the “G8 Open Data Charter,” which was declared at the G8 Lough Erne Summit in June 2013, geospatial information data was recognized as an area of high value. In addition to open data policy, data flow is a necessity; for example, the CKAN platform with data catalogs have been developed as open source with the provision for the flow of information. Various policies and government strategies on open data have been enforced since 2012 in Japan including the introduction of various guidelines and standard government terms and conditions

Visualization being an important aspect of geographic information, the use of various tools, such as FOSS4G, is required. On the other hand, since the formats of open data currently vary, a cross-evaluation is necessary to determine the usability of the available data, especially in the case of geographical information comprising of latitudes and longitudes, as well as readable mechanical data. The format in which governments use or distribute data—in addition to desktop GIS and web GIS—is particularly important, as general-purpose tools are also important requirements for using open data.

Based on Japanese trends on open data policies/datasets/activities in recent years, the purpose of this study is: first, to compare the extent and circumstances surrounding the openness of geospatial information in Japan, and; second, to analyze especially open source platforms and applications for using open data.

The classified data categories of Japanese open data are, population and statistical data account for more than 20% of total open data, while the next most common category, public relations, accounts for about 16% of government information. The geographic data format is primarily distributed for disaster prevention, education, and tourism sectors, as much of the original data and urban planning diagrams contain positional information regarding facilities.

In recent years, the Code for Japan, a civic tech community in Japan, has focused on the context of the FOSS4G. Consequently, the Japanese have published open data in more than 100 local governments; this data is simply provided as a file on the website of the local governments.

However, the staff in the technology department of Japanese local governments introducing platforms such as CKAN and the information policy issues is insufficient. The other hands, CKAN and NetCommons (Japanese open source CMS) have been readily adopted in some local governments, such as Fukuoka City and Shizuoka Prefecture. In addition, some local governments provide open geospatial data using the OSM platform. Therefore, an increase in programs that combine enhancements (more provide and use case) and platforms that offer easy access to open geospatial data is necessary.

Academic Discipline and Sub-Disciplines : GIScience; Social Geography

Keywords : Open Data; Open Government; CKAN

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