Open Data in Asia

An Overview of Open Data Policies and Practices in 13 Countries

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Content

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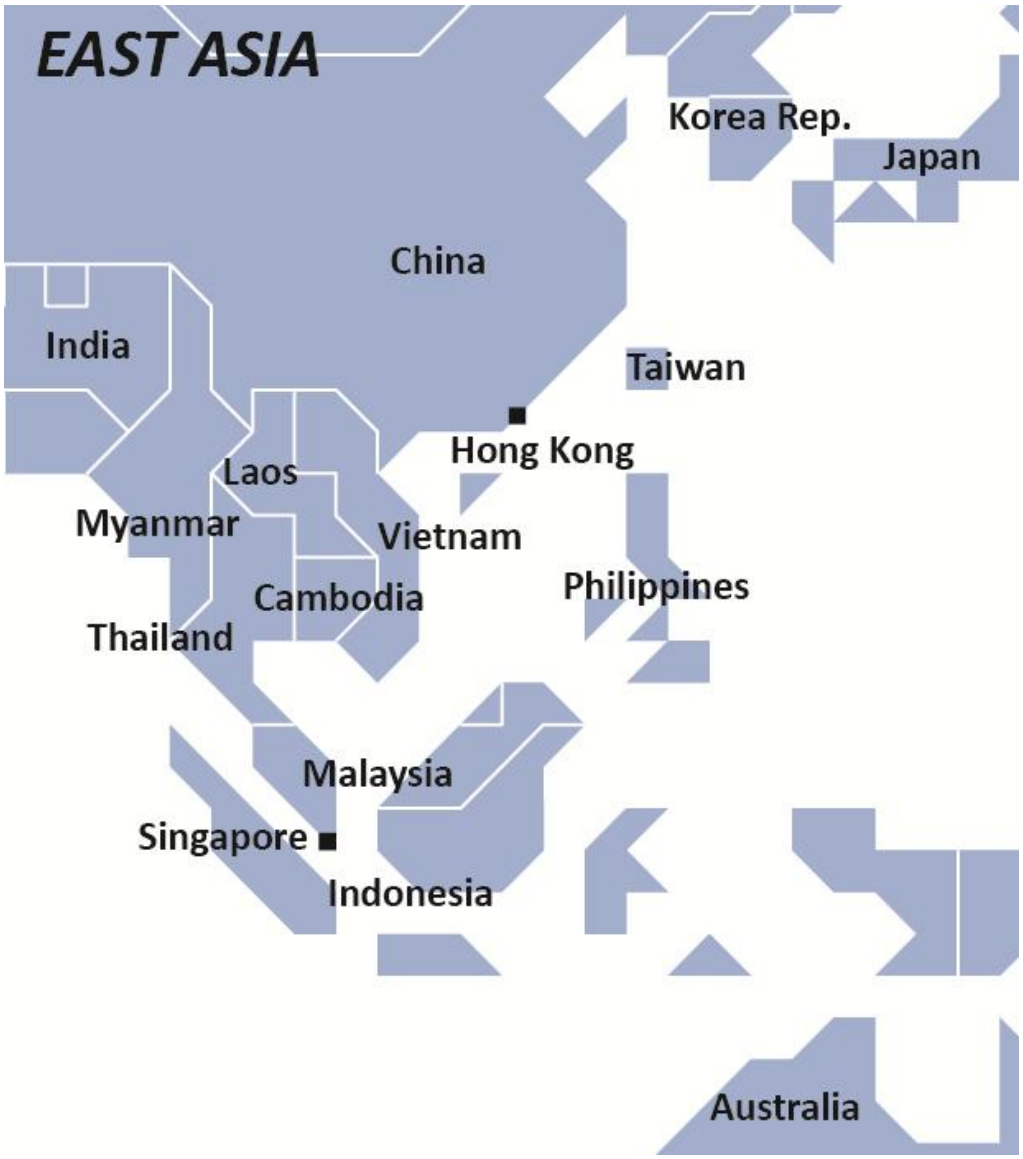


GDP per capita, in USD (2013) IMF* estimates	
Cambodia	1,015
Hong Kong	38,604
Indonesia	3,498
Japan	39,321
Korea Rep.	23,837
Laos	1,490
Malaysia	10,428
Myanmar	914
Philippines	2,792
Singapore	52,917
Taiwan	20,706
Thailand	5,878
Vietnam	1,895

*International Monetary Fund data include Taiwan as “Province of China”

1. Introduction

Open Data is a relatively new concept in Asia; currently few governments in the region include it in their national ICT or economic development strategies. One of the first international events where the opening of public sector information was discussed, was the 2008 Ministerial Meeting of the OECD in Seoul on the **Future of the Internet Economy.** The Seoul Declaration states that the Internet economy has become a new source of growth, with the potential to boost the whole economy, to foster innovation, competitiveness and user participation, and to contribute effectively to the prosperity of society as a whole. Governments around the world were looking for ways to revive the economy after the 2008 financial crisis and opening public sector information was considered a way to create value from data which can be *freely used, reused and distributed by anyone.*

Since 2010, there have been thematic sessions and workshops focusing on public sector information and Open Data policy development in Asia at international and regional meetings of the Internet Governance Forum with representatives from government, academia, business and civil society.

At these meetings, questions about a more comprehensive overview on Open Data developments in Asia came up. This study aims to provide an overview on the current situation of Open Data policies and practices in North and South-East Asia. The countries included are, in alphabetical order: Cambodia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. The selected countries are part of the group categorized as "East Asia and the Pacific" in the widely used Knowledge Economy Index of the Worldbank.

In this study, we use the term Open Data in the context of open public and/or government data referring to the OECD definition on Public Sector Information as "information, including information products and services, generated, created, collected, processed, preserved, maintained, disseminated, or funded by or for Government or public institutions"(OECD 2008). The definition of Open Data is much broader, and includes any type of data that is free to use, re-use and redistribute without any legal, technological or social restrictions (Open Knowledge Foundation).

The study shall contribute to a better understanding of Open Data for socio-economic development and innovation, and stimulate discussion among the different stakeholders of the Digital Economy/Open Data community in government, business, academia, and civil society. It also aims to contribute to more collaboration and activities across the Asia Pacific region. Currently, most countries develop national Open Data strategies, however, there are many issues that require cross-border data exchange and analysis. Public Open Data is always also global data, as anyone can access and use it.

2. Method and Approach

Public Sector Information/Open Data is not a standalone action item as part of a government's ICT strategy, but is embedded in national socio-economic strategies, policies, practices, and cultures. Open Data can be considered a reflection of the overall knowledge society and internet economy maturity of a country.

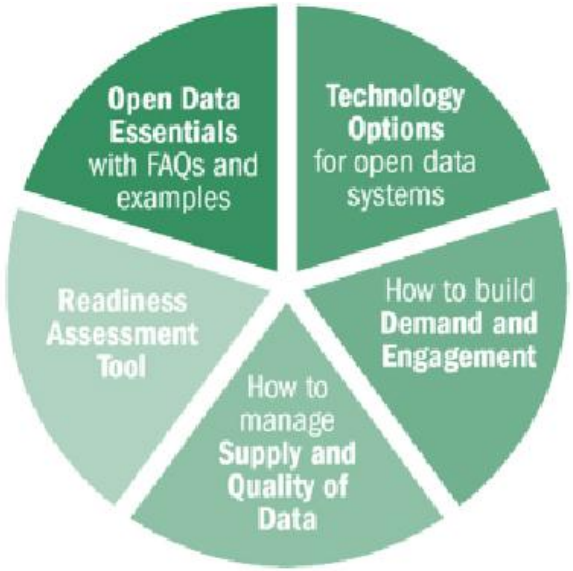
The information and communication technology infrastructure of a country and the accessibility of information and services through the internet in that country show the general ability of a country to generate, adopt and diffuse knowledge. There are a number of international organisations and think tanks developing and tracking indicators measuring ICT and e-Government readiness, which we have included in our analysis.

In this study, we use the term Open Data in the context of open public and/or government data referring to the OECD definition on Public Sector Information as "information, including information products and services, generated, created, collected, processed, preserved, maintained, disseminated, or funded by or for Government or public institutions"(OECD 2008). The definition of Open Data is much broader, and includes any type of data that is free to use, re-use and redistribute without any legal, technological or social restrictions (Open Knowledge Foundation).

The most comprehensive of these measurements is the Knowledge Index (KI) compiled by the Worldbank, which monitors key variables across 146 countries (including Hong Kong and Taiwan, which are otherwise not included in United Nations statistics) with data from 1995 until today. The index provides us with a picture of the overall **potential** of knowledge development in a given country. The variables included in the Knowledge Index are grouped in three so-called "Knowledge Economy pillars" – education and human resources, innovation and information and communication technology (ICT) of the society.

Another is the Knowledge Economy Index (KEI), which takes into account whether the environment is conducive for knowledge to be **used effectively** for economic development. It is an aggregate index that represents the overall level of development of a country or region towards the Knowledge Economy. The KEI includes as an additional pillar the "economic incentive and institutional regime" which tracks indicators relating to governance, accountability, rule of law and civil liberties. The KI and KEI are both useful tools. However, a quantitative assessment of a country's knowledge economy status alone is not enough to understand the different levels of Open Data preparedness. This study therefore additionally draws upon the recently developed Open Data Readiness assessment tool.

Open Data Readiness Dimensions



Source: *Worldbank*

(With an example of a question from the assessment tool)

1. **Leadership:** Is there someone in the government driving Open Data developments?
2. **Political/legal framework:** Is there access to information regulations and Freedom of Information laws? Is the Creative Commons infrastructure in place?
3. **Institutional Structure:** Which government department is dealing with operational/practical issues of data management?
4. **Data within Government:** Is key government data (statistics etc.) available in digital format?
5. **Data demand/re-use:** Is there a demand for public data from civil society and/or business?
6. **Open Data Ecosystem:** Are there a multiple stakeholders?
7. **Financing:** Is there a budget for Open Data?
8. **Infrastructure:** What is the general ICT readiness, Internet penetration, ICT skills in the country?

The Open Data readiness tool provides practical support for any country developing a sound and productive environment for Open Data, and has been used by a number of governments as a planning tool. This readiness tool looks at different dimensions and suggests analytical questions for each of them.

In the selected 13 countries, we have sought answers from different stakeholders in government and civil society to these questions and also asked for examples of interesting use cases. In some countries, Open Data/PSI is already quite advanced, however, even in those countries, not all dimensions are well developed.

Open Data is a complex issue and the department/agency in charge sometimes has no influence on changing enabling factors, such as copyright and licensing of data, or training of staff in editing meta-data and creating data catalogues. Data markets need to be developed; the supply of public open data does not automatically create demand; and the value of publicly available data is often not immediately visible nor can it be foreseen as value is derived from its usage.

In some of the least developed countries with low internet penetration and hardly any digital information services in place, the concept of open public data is not yet on the agenda of governments. Interestingly, in some these countries, there are active and diverse civil society groups developing their own open data sites through scraping public data only available in non-open or proprietary formats, crowd-sourcing of non-published data and publishing own data collections. Civil society groups are vital for open data developments, but are they are creating the demand for high quality public data to address societal problems based on data-driven decision-making?

Restricted access to information is not always limited to emerging economies either; a highly developed internet economy does not guarantee a dynamic open data community, nor is there a direct correlation between high GDP and open data readiness. The wide range of economic development among countries in East Asia from Myanmar to Singapore therefore provides interesting insights into these dynamics and the state of information societies' policies and perceptions. A common attribute across Asian countries is the relatively high (information) power distance between government and citizens.

Power Distance according to G. Hofstede "expresses the degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. The fundamental issue here is how a society handles inequalities among people. People in societies exhibiting a large degree of power distance accept a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification." In cross-cultural studies, differences in power distance can explain different attitudes towards right to access information. The Power Distance Index lists Malaysia with the highest score (104), followed by the Philippines (94), Indonesia (78), Singapore (74), Hong Kong (68), Thailand (64), South Korea (60), Taiwan (58), Japan (54). http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions/power-distance-index/

Open Data and internet usage are rapidly developing in the region, particularly in the emerging economies. However, while some of the figures relating to access to data and amount of data available in open formats might soon be outdated, attitudes, mindsets and traditions of how governments see their roles and responsibilities in responding to information needs, and the willingness of governments to engage with business and civil society to jointly develop data-driven policies and decisions remains to be seen.

Open Data related Indicators

Overview of general indicators relating to current state of internet economy in the selected countries. The figures are based on the most recent reports in 2014 and statistics published by international organizations, research institutes, consultancies and think tanks (as of July 2014) and include:

1. Knowledge Economy Indicator / Worldbank 2012
2. Networked Readiness Index /World Economic Forum 2013
3. Internet penetration / World Internet Statistics 2012
4. Prosperity Index / Legatum 2013
5. World Press Freedom Index / Freedom House 2014
6. Corruption Perception Index/Transparency International
7. E-government Readiness / UN 2013
8. Democracy Index / Economist Intelligence Unit 2012
9. State of the Internet / Akamai 2013

Note: *Few reports include all 13 countries; in this survey, we have only included figures if not more than 3 countries are missing. Generally, figures for the least developed countries in Asia (Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar) are often not taken into account simply because no reliable data is available or because the publisher of the data has no business in those countries. The potentially useful Open Data Index (https://index.okfn.org/), an independent peer-reviewed assessment covers 70 countries as of 2013, only includes seven of the selected countries.*

Knowledge Economy Index in East Asia and Pacific (2012)

Rank		Country	Missing Data	KEI	KI	Economic Incentive Regime	Innovation	Education	ICT
1	1	New Zealand		8.97	8.93	9.09	8.66	9.81	8.3
2	-1	Australia		8.88	8.98	8.56	8.92	9.71	8.32
3	0	Taiwan, China	X	8.77	9.1	7.77	9.38	8.87	9.06
4	3	Hong Kong, China	X	8.52	8.17	9.57	9.1	6.38	9.04
5	-1	Japan		8.28	8.53	7.55	9.08	8.43	8.07
6	-1	Singapore		8.26	7.79	9.66	9.49	5.09	8.78
7	-1	Korea, Rep.		7.97	8.65	5.93	8.8	9.09	8.05
8	0	Malaysia		6.1	6.25	5.67	6.91	5.22	6.61
9	0	Thailand		5.21	5.25	5.12	5.95	4.23	5.55
10	2	Mongolia		4.42	4.45	4.3	2.91	5.83	4.63
11	2	China		4.37	4.57	3.79	5.99	3.93	3.79
12	-1	Philippines		3.94	3.81	4.32	3.77	4.64	3.03
13	-3	Fiji		3.94	4.6	1.96	4.65	5.27	3.87
14	1	Vietnam	X	3.4	3.6	2.8	2.75	2.99	5.05
15	-1	Indonesia		3.11	2.99	3.47	3.24	3.2	2.52
16	1	Lao PDR		1.75	1.84	1.45	1.69	2.01	1.84
17	-1	Cambodia		1.71	1.52	2.28	2.13	1.7	0.74
18	0	Myanmar	X	0.96	1.22	0.17	1.3	1.88	0.48

Source: *Worldbank http://info.worldbank.org/etools/kam2/KAM_page5.asp*

Country	Knowledge Economy Index (2012)	Networked Readiness WEF (2013)	Internet penetration % pop. (2012)	Prosperity Index (2013) Legatum	World Press Freedom (2014)	Transparency International (2013)	E-Government Readiness UN (2012)	Democracy Index EIU (2012)	Broadband Connectivity Akamai (2013)
Cambodia	131	106	4.4	110	144	160	155	100	n.a.
Hong Kong	18	14	74.5	19	61	15	n.a.	63	12
Indonesia	107	76	22.1	69	132	114	97	53	84
Japan	22	21	79.5	21	59	18	18	23	6
Korea Rep.	29	11	**82.5**	26	57	46	**1**	20	**1**
Laos	130	n.a.	9	92	171	140	153	156	n.a.
Malaysia	48	30	60.7	44	147	53	40	64	62
Myanmar	144	n.a.	1	n.a.	145	157	160	155	n.a.
Philippines	92	86	32.4	66	149	94	88	69	82
Singapore	23	**2**	75	18	150	**5**	10	81	33
Taiwan	**13**	10	75.4	22	**50**	36	n.a.	35	31
Thailand	66	74	30	52	130	102	92	58	42
Vietnam	103	84	33.9	62	174	116	83	144	83

** highest rankings highlighted*

Other Factors Relevant for Open Data and Public Sector Information

There are other enabling factors that contribute to an environment where Open Data can thrive, some are related to the regulatory environment, such as Freedom of Information Acts and open licensing jurisdiction. Equally important are universities or other education institutions providing courses on data science, data curation or journalism, information science or related disciplines which build skills necessary to the use and analysis of data.

Open Data Community: The existence of a dynamic and diverse community of open source developers and information entrepreneurs indicates a potential for Open Data activities, but these communities are difficult to measure. Barcamps could be one of the indicators for such a community.

Barcamps are an international network of user-generated conferences, which are open and participatory. They often focus on early-stage web applications, open source technologies, social protocols and open data formats. The first one took place in Palo Alto in 2005 and tech groups in Asia have quickly adopted it. Apart from Barcamps, blogger groups, wikipedians, civic hackers and coders, open source advocates, data journalists, apps developers, and other Internet and media activists are part of an Open Data stakeholder environment. We found such groups in all countries included in this study.

Business Community: Established businesses in the ICT, publishing and information services are another important part of an Open Data environment as well as information/media industries, Big Data, Business Intelligence and analytics solutions and service providers. There has been little research combining Open and Big Data concepts in Asia.

The information industry sector is often one that needs public information to produce value-added services and traditionally paid for access to such information, e.g. legal and financial services, as well as architecture, real estate and others using mapping and geospatial data. In many countries, government agencies created paid business information services in the past; a business model which may no longer be appropriate within an open data policy framework.

Dynamic Open Data environments are built on collaboration between multiple stakeholders and are changing the relationship between government and civil society towards more participatory modes of joint exploration, experimentation and collaboration with public data. Traditionally, the power distance between government and citizens is quite high in many Asian countries, often with a culture of secrecy rather than transparency, and governments providing citizens with information on a “need-to-know” rather than “right-to-know” basis.

Civil Society: Civicus, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation developed an "Enabling Environment Index" that analyses the state of civil society across 70 countries. Civil Society is the public sphere created by individual and collective actions to advance shared interest outside family, market, or state. The 2013 Index only includes 5 of the 13 countries included in this study, and is therefore not included in the table of indicators. The ranking of the included countries is: Korea (23), Indonesia (59), Malaysia (68), Thailand 65) and Vietnam (100), out of 109 examined countries with New Zealand and Canada ranking highest. More research on civil society in Asia and its role in enabling data-driven innovation is necessary. In some countries examined in this survey, citizens still largely focus on achieving higher transparency of their governments, whereas in New Zealand's advanced Open Data envrionment civil servants closely collaborate with civil society and universities on improving public data sets for better decision-making. Whether and how relationships between government and civil society change through Open Data initiatives is another field where more research that goes beyond anecdoctal evidence is needed.

One of the most recent assessments of Open Data developments globally is the Open Data Barometer developed by the Worldwide Web Foundation and the Open Data Institute which covers 77 countries and combines a peer-reviewed expert survey with secondary data and indicators.

The 2013 Barometer provides data and rankings for Korea (12th), Japan (14th) Singapore (29th) Thailand (31st) Philippines (47th) and Indonesia (52nd). Since only about half of the countries in this study are taken into account, we have not included it in the list (page 9). However, future editions of the Open Data Barometer may well include countries currently not examined.

The World Justice Project (WJP) describes itself as independent, multidisciplinary organization working to advance the rule of law around the world. Their WJP Rule of Law Index measures "how the rule of law is experienced in everyday life" in 99 countries based on household and expert interviews. The index is based on 47 indicators in different dimensions, such as accountable government, security and fundamental rights, open government and regulatory enforcement. The rankings are included in the table below.

The role of civil society in creating a dynamic demand and supply in the new Open Data markets cannot be underestimated. Some governments create public information portals with datasets rarely downloaded. User statistics of data portals need to be monitored and interpreted for further development. Only a few data platforms offer the opportunity for users to suggest new datasets. Often, the decision on what data is made available on the platform is not transparent, making it difficult for the user to know whether the data supply is reliable and complete.

Other Factors relating to the Enabling Environment for Open Data

Country	Freedom of Information Acts/Laws	WJP Rule of Law Index	Creative Commons	Data Science/Journalism courses	First Barcamp
Cambodia	Draft for Freedom of Information law has been discussed since early 2000, (secret) draft on cybercrime law 2012	83	no	Royal University of Phnom Penh offers data-driven journalism courses (DMC)	2008
Hong Kong	no FOIA, but Code on Access to Information from 1995	10	yes	Hong Kong University (JMSC), Chinese University	2007
Indonesia	Public Information Openness Law 2010	35	yes	Universitas Indonesia and others, information science courses	2009
Japan	Law Concerning Access to Information Held by Administrative Organs,2001	9	yes	Many universities and long tradition in providing data and information science related courses	2009
Korea	Access to information constitutional right 1996, Open Data law 2013	15	yes	KAIST, Seoul National University: Research Institute of Public Information	2008
Laos	Art 44 of Constitution “Freedom of Press”, but all media and internet state-controlled	n.a.	no	n.a.	2011
Malaysia	FOIA in 2 states 2011: Selangor and Penang, Art 10 of Constitution “Freedom of expression” limited by Sedition Act, Security offenses Act and Defamation Laws	48	yes	Nottingham University: CSCC Centre for the Study of Communications and Culture; Taylor’s University	2008
Myanmar	2008 Constitution provides Freedom of Expression, but high level of censorship existing restrictions reduced in 2012, new laws in preparation	n.a.	no	n.a.	2010

Philippines	Senate Bill No. 1733 passed in March 2014	59	yes	Several universities with information/data science courses	2008
Singapore	Art 14 Constitution Freedom of speech, in practice many restrictions, 2013 Media Development Authority licensing scheme for online news site	19	yes	Singapore Management University, Singapore Internet Research Centre at the Nanyang Technological University	2007
Taiwan	Freedom of Government Information Act 1997	n.a.	yes	Academia Sinica Information Science Taipei	2008
Thailand	Official Information Act 1997	42	yes	Asian Institute of Technology Bangkok, Thammasat University: Information Science	2008
Vietnam	No FOIA. Decree 72, or the "Management, Provision, Use of Internet Services and Information Content Online" 2013	91	yes	Vietnam National University Information Science	2008

Notes: *The The information about Information laws largely comes from secondary sources, as this information was often not available directly on government websites.*

Rule of Law Index 2012-2013 (World Justice Project) sub-factor "open government": access to official information, administrative procedures, draft laws and regulations

The information about education in data/information related courses only lists some of the universities. Information/data related skills are interdisciplinary and relevant programs/courses may be "hidden" in different faculties.

Country Snapshot: Cambodia

The Cambodian government has three major data generating sources: the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) at the Ministry of Planning (MOP)conducts large surveys and censuses (the last one in 2008), the *Commune Councils* generate data for local-level planning, and most ministries collect administrative statistics pertaining to their activities. The Guidelines for the formulation of the National Strategic Development Plan for 2014-1018 address the governance challenges of data quality and standards: **"**the quality of especially the administrative data requires improvement. For this, the statistics departments in line ministries must revisit their data collection methods, and if necessary, seek assistance from the NIS/MOP. Such a step will also help establish a better dialogue between different ministries and agencies." The guidelines also state that "there is still limited standardisation in the definitions of indicators and data-generating processes across different agencies. There is also limited knowledge on data use among government personnel". Government key websites provide census and economic data in Khmer and English, however, the format is in non-open PDF. The website of the National ICT Development Authority, where one might expect some information about ICT related strategies, has not been updated since 2012. http://www.nida.gov.kh/.

Transparency on government spending is low; data on institutional spending, project bidding and financial management are rarely available to the public and media. Information that is in the public interest should be made public for verification, and legislation giving citizens and media the right to access it should be introduced in the name of open government, public debate, and social integrity, says Koun (2014). A freedom of information law has been proposed for 10 years, but so far not drafted. More than 20 years after the Constituent Assembly Elections in 1993, governance across the government is still low.

The most comprehensive open data portal comes from a civil society organization called Open Development Cambodia (http://www.opendevelopmentcambodia.net), which compiles freely available data in a 'one-stop shop' in open format. ODC provides data on economic land concessions, forest cover, natural resources, company data and many and other information about Cambodia and its economic and social development. Its 'open data' approach guarantees materials and information are available to all users for use and re-use.

Cambodia has a local group of the Open Knowledge Foundation (http://kh.okfn.org/)

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http://www.mop.gov.kh/Home/NSDP/NSDP20142018/tabid/216/Default.aspx

Country Snapshot: Hong Kong

Hong Kong prides itself to be one of the most advanced internet economy, and scores high in most technical and infrastructure readiness and rankings. In 2011 Hong Kong set up a Public Sector Information portal, Data.one*, and released selected data sets provided by government departments. The portal is managed by the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) which is under the CEDB (Commerce and Economic Development Bureau). The objective of Data.one is to provide "the PSI in a form or on terms that facilitates its wider dissemination and re-use [which] will increase the value that the community realizes from the use of such information".* It is not clear why Hong Kong does not adopt the international naming standard which should be www.data.gov.hk for a site using public data sets, nor why Hong Kong avoids the term "open data" and uses "PSI" instead. Data.one leads to this URL: http://www.gov.hk/en/theme/psi/datasets/

In 2011 and 2013, the government launched apps competitions with the ICT community to encourage software developers and IT students to develop ideas and solutions based on the published datasets. The most recent competition resulted in more than 100 contributions, of which 22% were based on using traffic data sets, followed by weather (16 %) and air pollution (12%). Promoting apps development is currently the only form of developing demand for PSI. On the regulatory side, Hong Kong faces some challenges, as the HKSAR lacks comprehensive access to information laws as well as copyright regulations that would provide users a sound basis for business built on public data. A revision of information laws is currently under review by the Law Reform Commission. In the recent fourth update of the Digital 21 Strategy (Budget 2014-15) the government proposed a series of initiatives under the theme of "Smarter Hong Kong, Smarter Living", and announced that it will make "all government information released for public consumption machine-readable in digital formats from next year onwards to provide more opportunities for the business sector. Currently, Public Sector Information available for free access covers real-time data such as road traffic information, geo-referenced public facility data, property market statistics, population census statistics, etc."

On the demand side, there is an active Open Data community, www.opendatahk.com, which has attracted more than 400 members and advocates open data development in Hong Kong through active community engagement. Opendata Hong Kong is the first chapter of the Open Knowledge Foundation in Asia. The wider business, ICT and academic community is just starting to get involved in the Hong Kong's open data development.

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Country Snapshot: Indonesia

Indonesia is one of the founding members of the Open Government Partnership, and reaching higher levels of government transparency and accountability are one of the driving factors for open data development in the country. A recent Open Government Data Readiness Assessment by the World Wide Web Foundation states that while the country has made far-reaching political, economic and judicial reform in the past decade, low-quality public services, regional economic and social disparities remain challenges in the development (Alonso 2013). The assessment also reveals that while there is an active civil society on freedom of information, government transparency and accountability have been in place for many years, there are few dedicated open data groups. Jakarta has one of the most active open data community, and recently hold the Jakarta Open Data Challenge (HackJakarta) using public transport and city budget data. Since 2013, the country is also part of the Open Knowledge Foundation. Most of the Open Data activities are driven by international organisations such as the Worldbank and international donors and foundations active in the country.

There is currently only a beta-version of an open data portal which was launched in 2012 (http://satupemerintah.net/); the government aims to launch a portal in mid-2014.* The national statistics agency, Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS-Statistics Indonesia) www.bps.go.id, publishes most statistical data in open format, but the material is copyrighted.

The country is rich in natural resources, however, information about the public revenue of extractive industries is still rather treated as “state secret”. During the recent Open Government Partnership Asia Pacific regional meeting, which was hosted by Indonesia, environmental NGO discussed topics from extractive revenue management to sustainable natural resources, and several speakers highlighted that Indonesia has not yet committed to disclose data on revenues obtained from resource exploitation. Having better access to data would increase the ability of citizen engagement and accountability mechanism in environmental and natural resources related issues, which has been an area of potential social conflicts and environmental risks according to the Indonesian Center for Environmental Law.

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Country Snapshot: Japan

Public data open by default and in open format has been part of the National IT strategy since 2010, and a roadmap for a national open data policy has been discussed in the eGovernment Taskforce between 2011 and 2012. At an "eGov Open Data Practitioners Conference" in 2012, technical standards, prioritization of data release, legal and licensing issues were discussed and a beta version of a national open data catalogue was released at "Datameti" http://datameti.go.jp/?lang=en in early 2013. The Abe Administration endorsed open data with a focus on business innovation and growth, but is also trying to determine the cost for the government to open data, e.g. provision of previous not open format information, creating meta-data, interaction with potential re-users, training and education of information professionals in the public sector.

The Fukushima earthquake in 2011 was a game-changer for Open Data awareness in the country and was the starting point for many open data projects related to recovery assistance, creation of open API for spatial, energy and environmental data. Hackathons and app contests addressing power shortage, reuse of geospatial information and crowd sourced infographics relating to mitigating and monitoring disasters. Safecast and Fukushima Wheel are examples of crowd-sourced open data applications.

In 2012 the Open Data Promotion Consortium was established which aims to bring together government, academia and business partners; its secretariat is supported by the Mitsubishi Research Institute. The consortium promotes open data and supports the govern-ment's "ICT Policy for Realizing the Networked Knowledge and Information Society" which aims to improving the open data environment to distribute information more widely and make it open to all people, industries, and fields. Today, more than 60 cities have active open data communities, both civic and tech communities. Japan also has a chapter of the Open Knowledge Foundation and is actively contributing to international Open Data discourse. The country is also the only Asian member signing the G8 Open Data Charta.

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Open Knowledge Foundation Japan http://okfn.jp/home/aboutus/

Country Snapshot: Korea

South Korea introduced an open data portal (www.data.go.kr) in 2011, but the country's public information disclosure initiatives go back more than a decade, when the government developed Minwon 24 into one of the most citizen-focused information portal. Last year the Park administration launched the"Government 3.0" plan which will provide access to a wide range of public information. The Government 3.0 plan was one of Park's key campaign pledges along with the promise of a "creative economy", and the government promises that by 2016, it will nearly quadruple the scope of administrative data releases from 16% to 60% of the available total source documents in areas like transport, climate, finance and welfare (Cain 2014). On the demand site, there is a dynamic linked and open data community including a local OKFN group.

The Open Data policy is developed under the office for "Creative Government and Management Office" and formulates policies on promoting a creative government and opening public information, and promotes administrative efficiency through interagency collaboration and improving administrative systems. The Ministry of Security and Public Administration (MOSPA) is the lead ministry on open data policy in Korea; the open data portal is operating by the Open Data Center (ODC) with is part of the National Information Society Agency (NIA).

One of the most active Open Data sites is Seoul Open Data Plaza (data.seoul.go.kr) managed by the Metropolitan government of Seoul. It started an open data initiative in 2012sharing public information with citizens in order to create diverse business opportunities for the private sector and to develop IT industries. The plaza is an online channel to share and provide citizens with all of Seoul's public data, such as real-time bus operation schedules, subway schedules, locations of public Wi-Fi services, shoeshine shops, and facilities for disabled people. Information registered in Seoul Open Data Plaza is provided in the open API format, and is designed to enable citizens to be able to use it in creating diverse businesses.

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Seoul Open Data Plaza http://english.seoul.go.kr/policy-information/key-policies/informatization/

Seoul Open Data Plaza http://english.seoul.go.kr/policy-information/key-policies/informatization/

Ministry of Security and Public Administration (MOSPA) Creative Government Strategy Office http://www.mospa.go.kr/eng/sub/a02/functions/screen.do

Country Snapshot: Laos

The country is one of the poorest countries in Asia, and the combination of low ICT access and literacy, largely non-transparent and corrupt government make it difficult to find a starting point for open data. While the importance of ICT as an essential tool for development of the country and its role in economic development and meeting Millennium Development Goals is stressed in all official statements, the overall government e-government strategy to strengthen such development, is hardly reflected in the current internet readiness of the government. Lao Minister of Post and Telecommunications, Mr Hiem Phommachanh states at an international meeting that "many countries and people cannot take advantage of ICT resources because of financial difficulties, disabilities, low-literacy, remoteness, cultural and language barriers", however, these barriers are often a consequence of poor governance.

Since joining the WTO in 2013, the website of the Ministry of Planning and Investment (www.investlaos.gov.la) has slightly improved, however, the links to other government department provided on this site are often not functioning or only lead to outdated information, non-functional websites, and statistics in PDF format. Most information portals with relevant and updated data are run or financed by international organizations, such as the Rural Poverty Portal.

One of the best data sites is the Data and Information Services Portal of the Mekong River Commission (MRC)http://portal.mrcmekong.org/ which is an intergovernmental organization. The MRC collects and manages a range of data and information enables direct access, including to real-time information and downloadable data such as spatial and mapping data, time-series, non-spatial data, as well as technical documents.

MRC could become a catalyst foropen data across member countries (Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam plus so-called dialogue partners China and Myanmar) which belong to the least developed economies in Asia Pacific. The high quality data and information services on different aspects of the Mekong rivers provide data to many different stakeholders, public sector staff, local and international organizations, academic and commercial users, as well as general public. Currently, the information is accessible, however, there is a complicated system of pay barriers with data fees for a price category may be different for different data user account types. Since the MRC depends on funding from donors from bilateral and multilateral development and financial institutions, all of which have adopted open data policies, the case for opening MRC data could be made.

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Country Snapshot: Malaysia

At last year's UMNO* International Forum Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak spoke about significant change "common to the societies around the world. We now have technology that supports a much wider and deeper range of public involvement in policy-making, with 'open source government' and open data breaking down traditional divides." Malaysia has promoted Open Source Software in the Public Sector for many years, among others through the Malaysian Government Open Source Software Conference (MyGOSSCON), but only started on open data portal last year. The site www.gov.my lists datasets from 24 ministries, however, only half of them have published data, and the top provider of data, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, published much of its data in PDF format. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment as well at the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities, both of which produce data which is in demand by environmental NGOs, have not published anything as of June 2014.

The data portal has been set up under the National Framework Big Data under the Ministry of Communication and Multimedia Commission in 2013 and aims to enhance the ability of the government to make decisions based on facts and data. The 2014 Government IT and Internet bills encourage all ministries to prepare and take the initiative to identify data for the implementation for open data in each of their core services.

On the demand site, a number of civil society and volunteer networks have since developed, most well known internationally is the Sinar project, which uses open source technology and ideas to track and measure corruption. Sinar Project is a collection of related open source projects that comprises open data providers and applications, tracking people of interest (e.g. CEOs of construction companies receiving public funds for projects), bill watcher which tracks proposed bills in parliament, and corruption. Although the various government agencies provide a lot of services and information online, the data is not available in open format making data scraping a necessity.

*United Malays National Organisation, the largest political party in Malaysia

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Country snapshot: Myanmar

The Worldbank Knowledge Economy Index ranks Myanmar as second lowest among 157 countries across all key variables relating to ICT, innovation, education as well as economic incentive and institutional regime; and the most recent Internet World Statistics report (2012) shows that internet penetration is around 1%, although with the entry of two international telecom operators, Telenor and Ooredoo, rolling out voice and data services nationwide starting this year, these figures are expected to move up fast. Recent reports and studies about Myanmar (ADB 2012, Cheesman 2012, and McKinsey 2013) describe the backwardness of everything related to information, from information laws, information access, ICT infrastructure to internet governance. With the recent opening of the country, most observers expect a fast catch-up process.

Building the soft infrastructure, capacity, skills and mindset is another challenge. Nwe Nwe Aye says that the government in Myanmar is still heavily circumscribed by secrecy and lack of transparency, and that there is "no sense of political rule as a participative process"* The culture of an authoritarian society is hard to throw off, and technology may act as a catalyst, but there are quite a few countries with excellent ICT infrastructure and non-existing or low civic rights and public transparency as well.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB), is advising the government on ICT strategy and public administration reform. Following their tender for the development of an e-Governance Master Plan, Building ICT capacity is the basis for information and data management across the public sector, and also the basis for any Open Data initiative. All major global tech companies are preparing their investment plans for the country, many of them coupled with educational programmes or civil society collaborations. Myanmar has an active civil society working on various aspects of information and data, the most related to open data is *MIDO* (Myanmar ICT development organization, which organized the first internet freedom forum in Yangon last year as well as open data workshops, These networks and organisations could play an important role in building the soft infrastructure of the future information society.

The legal side of Myanmar's information and internet governance also needs to be reformed. Currently there exist a number of outdated but still valid laws, such as the "Burma Official Secrets Act" from 1932, instated by the British Colonial regime, which is part of the ongoing discussions on constitutional reform ahead of the 2015 elections. In April/May 2014, the first census in 31 years has been conducted supported by UN organisations, the data collection will take place in March and April, and provide a sound basis for all further socio-economic development. The Worldbank is regularly organizing workshops on open data usage http://data.worldbank.org/country/myanmar

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Country Snapshot: Philippines

As an emerging economy with sounds economic fundamentals and high growth rates, the current government aims responds to greater demand from citizens for government transparency and accountability. Earlier this year, the Senate approved the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill after years of discussion. In 2013 the country launched an open data platform http://data.gov.ph/ which states on its homepage: "Openness inspires trust with is the foundation for a genuine partnership". According to the National Open Data Action Plan 2014-2016 the primary goal of data.gov.ph is to "foster a citizenry empowered to make informed decisions, and to promote efficiency and transparency in government"

The country is one of the eight founding states of the Open Government Partnership, a multilateral initiative that "aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance"*

The Data.gov.ph website is one of the more interactive public data sites and encourages the public "to request for the data they want, send in comments, suggestions, and even stories of how they use open data. Likewise, it also encourages the public to participate by submitting applications and visualizations based on the public data. This engagement of ideas between the public and the government will help develop the platform even further, for the benefit of everyone involved". Hackathons around disaster resilience, national budgeting and health are core issues for collaborative data analysis. An example for such multi-stakeholder collaboration supported by the government is the "Readysaster: Hack for Resilience" event.*

The Philippines are internationally recognized as a country with the vibrant and advanced civil society, with a long history of citizen engagement in national and regional issues dating back to the 1986 People Power Revolution. It is estimated that 46% of the population are active member in at least on Civil Society Organization. Data and information skills training for the Civil Society are part of the Open Data Action Plan. There is also a national research portal on Open Data research funded by international organizations maintained by the Computer Studies School of De La Salle University http://www.opendataphils.org/

While the overall internet penetration in the country is still around 30%, the demand side for open data is well developed and driven by the connected, highly skilled part of the population.

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**Open Government Partnership http://www.opengovpartnership.org/about. The Philippines and Indonesia are the only Asian founding members.*

**Readysaster: Post event report 2014 https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B_7gVrtEHninOXhEdFFGdmQzTDBmNUlpUUZpZXEzcVZHW*

Country Snapshot: Singapore

The city state launched data.gov.sg in 2011, and describes it as "the first-stop portal to search and access publicly-available data published by the Singapore Government". There are around 8600 datasets from 60 government ministries and agencies. It is managed by the Ministry of Finance and the Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) of Singapore. The Singapore Land Authority is one of the key partners, as it provides OneMap, the authoritative cadastral map on which many apps are based. The website has a showcase of apps and the top rates ones are "Healthy Hawkers", "MyWeather@SG" and apps related to transport, housing, and health. The aims of the portal are to provide "convenient" access to public data, to create value through apps development and to facilitate analysis and research. Currently only around 50 per cent of the datasets on data.gov.sg are open (machine-readable), but IDA is working on opening up more.

The most active partner to promote public data re-use is a private organization called "UP Singapore" which stands for "Urban Prototyping Singapore" and describes itself as "ground-up innovation platform that makes creative use of technology and data to improve our urban environments and regularly organizes thematic hackathons". UP Singapore describes itself as a "new movement where people from the public, private and people sectors come together to tackle the wide range of social and environmental challenges facing our cities". The first UP Singapore event was held in June 2012, and has since organized eleven hackathons. They state that today their community comprises around 4,000 people from the tech / developer, business, marketing communities and government sectors.

To access the data provided at data.gov.sg, users must register with the government before they use any of the datasets, and agree to the terms of use. These terms of use are rather rigid, in particular regarding copyright and indemnity clauses. While the data is provided royalty-free, the intellectual property remains with the government; there is no open licensing. The Singapore government can also ask users to cease using datasets and remove them from their apps or website upon the request of the Singapore government.

Currently, Singapore does not have a chapter of the Open Knowledge Foundation and is generally not using the term "open data".

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Country Snapshot: Taiwan

Taiwan set up a government data portal in 2011 (www.data.gov.tw), and has a comprehensive framework for data-driven development with a strong focus on community engagement. The portal provides access to nearly 2000 datasets (as of May 2014) with interactive features allowing users to suggest data for publication and discuss open data use. Most datasets also come with good metadata. The portal includes data from different cities and provinces in the country.

After the typhoon Morakot in 2009, where there was strong criticism over the slow response, unpreparedness and lack of information from the government, the need for better information-and data sharing within the community in the natural disaster prone country became more evident. Today, most of the data sets on the portal are relating to disaster prevention and response as well as high quality mapping data. Open data advocate T.H.Schee lists more than 230 events of the open data community in the past few years, which have contributed to improved communication and dynamic exchanges between the public sector and the wider business and civil society using public information. The Open Data Alliance, founded in 2013, has more than 200 members, groups, institutes in the public, private and academic sector is a new platform between the data user communities the government.

Earlier this year, the Taiwanese Minister of Science & Technology, Chang San-cheng signed an agreement on collaboration between Taiwan and the UK Open Data Institute* stating that "Open Data can improve the transparency of government and improve citizen participation, which is needed in Taiwan to resolve various kinds of environment and economy issues. Open Data can help Taiwan not only be seen by the world, but also unlock potential economic values and enable Taiwan's companies to go global (…)".

Taiwan has the highest ranking in the Knowledge Economy Index and Press Freedom Index among the 13 countries in this study, and is one of the few countries successfully combining information push and pull elements in the open data environment, thus enabling a dynamic market for data.

The Open Knowledge Foundation has a local group in Taiwan.

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Country Snapshot: Thailand

ICT Policy Framework or ICT2020 is the policy framework for ICT development in Thailand for the year 2011 – 2020. The ICT2020 has identified open government data under a strategy on Smart Government. Under the ICT2020 is also the strategic National ICT Master plan for 2014 - 2020 which includes actions for the government to open the data to the public and allow third parties to reuse government data. According to a government official, the master plan is "still in the process to get an approval from the cabinet". *

The ICT2020 is rather an outline for e-government policy on developing smart public services, and open public data is only vaguely described as providing more access to information for citizens. The most recent update with the title "Smart Thailand towards Digital Economy" was presented by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology (MICT) at the 2014 Asia Pacific Telecommunity Policy and Regulatory Forum in Pattaya and talks about a "paradigm shift in Smart Era" while acknowledging values and conflicts in society in this development.

In 2010-2011 there have been some initiatives to create an open data portal (http://data.pm.go.th/) under the Office of the Prime Minister and Opendream, (http://opendream.co.th/) a social enterprise of "digital natives aiming to change the world through information". The URLs on the website pointing to Open Data Thailand sites such as opendata.in.th or data.pm.go.th are not functioning though as of May 2014, and it is not clear whether these initiatives are still operational.

Opendream has in collaboration with UNESCO developed games and apps to educate on flood mitigation, and also on health data apps, however, the data is mostly crowd-sourced rather than downloaded from public data portals. Apart from Opendream, there are several other NGOs and social enterprises aiming to support civil development in Thailand through information, communication and technologies.

Communication between civil society and governments has been described a "fluid and uneasy" in Thailand (ADB 2011); even though the 2001 Official Information Act has strengthened citizens' right to access public information, "state agencies do not well understand the law and the principle of people's rights to know and are not ready to provide good services of information disclosure" says N. Serirak (2001). The recent military coup has effectively reduced access to public information and exposed the vulnerability of the societal development in the country.

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Country Snapshot: Vietnam

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Summary and Outlook

The IMF (International Monetary Fund) classifies 5 of the countries in this report as "Advanced Economies", and the other 8 as "Developing Asia". One of the findings of this research is that highly developed internet economies do not necessarily have dynamic Open Data communities and markets. This applies both to Singapore and Hong Kong. Both countries started their Public Sector Information portals around 2011, but the demand site for the data had to be pushed by app competitions rather than through developing a dynamic exchange between stakeholders from supply and demand sides. Both countries also uses the term “Public Sector Information” rather than “Open Data” since neither has a freedom of information law.

In some countries the emphasis of open data is on creating the conditions for greater accountability and transparency of government, others focus on efficiency and innovation through value-added services through civic-minded technologists and startups. Indonesia and the Philippines are clearly advocating better governance through open data, whereas Hong Kong and Singapore stress innovation and development of ICT-related solutions.

Japan, Korea, and Taiwan include both perspectives in their strategies, whereas Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar are still at an early stage of building capacity for digital public services. Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia are countries with a tradition of restricted public information access and score low on information openness. In these countries, the trust level between civil society and government is often low, and public data is not considered a reliable source of information.

While Indonesia and Philippines are promoting government accountability, they score relatively low on transparency, so there is a certain discrepancy between official ambitions and reality. Data about national resources is still considered a national secret in Indonesia, and press freedom in the Philippines is among the lowest in the region.

Creating a dynamic environment for an open data economy can take a long time to nurture as there are many different building blocks to achieve “Open Data Readiness” as defined by the Worldbank. Given the diversity of experiences, practices and policies across Asia perhaps more knowledge sharing across countries could support the development. Such channels for knowledge transfer and collaboration already exist through ASEAN and the Asian Development Bank, although overall regional collaboration, in particular institutional collaboration, is still weak.

Since Open Public Data has political, economic and technical dimensions, it is a challenge for governments to develop public policies that address all aspects. At the core it is question about a new understanding of government and citizen collaboration. Setting up data portals with a few datasets, focusing only on the ICT and business community and advocating technological rather than societal innovation will make it difficult to realize the benefits of open data. Data-driven analysis and decision-making is also about capacity building for an increasingly knowledge-based and participatory society.

Given the fast pace of socio-economic development in Asia, many countries portrayed here are also fast developing internet economies. Removing barriers that cause friction in accessing and using data will be easier if the long-term social and economic benefits of an open information environment are better understood as necessary condition for development.

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