

Open Government Data in Latin America

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1 Content

The information produced and held by governments belongs to the public. Members of society should use this information to monitor, assess and assist the decision-making process.

To enable citizens to contribute to the policy-making process, and thereby effectively collaborate with government and, they need to have access to relevant information. Peoples access to government information is a powerful and crucial mechanism in ensuring government accountability and efficiency, and in promoting citizen empowerment.

Latin American countries have made significant progress in both transparency and access to information (ATI) during the past recent years. ATI legislation has been passed in several countries in the region. Civil society, donors and other stakeholders have supported the implementation of programs aimed at promoting transparency in different areas. However, most of these efforts have been focused on passing legislation to enable people to request public information, in individual bases (reactive transparency or ATI 1.0- in reference to the first stages of web technology-) and the proactive disclosure of certain basic categories of information.

However, some specialists are starting to support the idea that to emphasise the proactive disclosure of public information in reusable formats (open government data)- and not only to pay attention to the reactive side of the regime- is key to achieve greater use of public information and therefore a major benefit for society. This approach focuses on the idea that the use and reuse of public information strengthens citizens collaboration in the policymaking process.

It is worth noting that this notion of open government is driven, partially by the changes experienced during the last decade, in terms of information technology and communication tools that have facilitated the access to large amounts of information by a growing number of people.

The presentation will analyse the current status of the Access to Information and Open Government Data Agenda in Latin America, in general, and the Southern cone, in particular- showing the linkages between both agendas, and the common challenges they face. It will provide examples about the institutional, social, cultural, technological and legal constrains for this agenda in the region. Acknowledging these constrains, the presentation will map the possible stakeholders that could help to enhance the agenda in Latin America and the southern cone, in particular, and the possible strategies and synergies that

could develop. Finally, it will provide a set of key strategic issues that a common agenda should consider in the region to push for open government data.

2 About the Author

Silvana Fumega holds a Master degree in Public Policy from Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand) and an undergraduate degree in Political Science from the University of Buenos Aires (Argentina). At the beginning of 2010 she was awarded a Chevening Hansard Scholarship to participate of the Research Programme Chevening Hansard (United Kingdom). While in UK she collaborated with the Campaign for Freedom of Information (CFoI). As a specialist in Access to Public Information, she has served as a consultant for the World Bank Institute in Washington DC, the Undersecretary for Institutional Reform in Argentina, and the Archives and Access to Public Information Centre (Cainfo) in Uruguay, among others.

Fabrizio Scrollini is a PhD student at the Government Department of the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) where he researches on accountability and access to information. He earned a Master degree in Public Policy from Victoria University of Wellington (New Zealand) and a law degree from the Catholic University of Uruguay. He collaborated with the State Services Commission (New Zealand) and the Central Office of Information (UK) on e-participation and accountability initiatives. He worked as a Senior Consultant with the National Civil Service (Uruguay) and the Planning and Budget Office, in state sector reform initiatives. He also