Interview 14

Interviewee	16-Prov-C
Interviewer	Ashraf Shaharudin
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Interviewer
So let's start with the first question. Could you please describe your role in the <redacted>?

Interviewee
Yes. I'm a <redacted>. And I'm a <redacted>. First is the <redacted>. Are you familiar with [country C] system of key registers?

Interviewer
Not so much.

Interviewee
Not so much. OK, so we've got many key registers and I'm involved with <redacted>. The key register of topography, that's the small scale mapping, like the map, which is behind me. And <redacted> for the key register of large scale topography and to show you the difference I will change my background so that you can see. This large scale topography is much more detailed. This is roughly scale 1 to 2000 and the other one, the small scale topography is 1 to 10,000 and smaller 1 to million. I'm also <redacted> of imagery, like behind me now, and of 3D information.

So that's the four groups of data which <redacted> and they are all open data. They're only available through <redacted> and I hope you are familiar with the <redacted>. I don't have to explain it.

Interviewer
Yes. And how long have you been working in this or similar role?

Interviewee
In this role, I'm roughly about <redacted> years, but at that time, <redacted> years ago, I started with only <redacted> products and services, which was <redacted>, so this one. And that was because before that I was also involved in another role connected to <redacted>, and gradually that role declined and my role as <redacted> grew by getting more products and services.

Interviewer
OK, so if I understand correctly, so your role right now is really just about open data?

Interviewee
Yeah, that's correct. That's probably also why <redacted> brought you in touch with me, yes. So open data is very relevant in my job.

Interviewer
If I may ask, how long has <redacted> been implementing open data?

Interviewee
That's a good question. I'm not sure about all but for my product, the first one, the small scale topography, that was since <redacted>. Then the large scale topography was since <redacted>. Aerial imagery has been somewhere around <redacted> was the first one and the important, most

important one, the large scale imagery, at high resolution, is available since <redacted> as open data and 3D information since <redacted>.

Interviewer
Quite recent.

Interviewee
So all quite recent, yes.

Interviewer
OK. What do you think is the value of open data to society from the point of view of <redacted>?

Interviewee
Yeah, well, the value of open data for society is that everybody can use it for the purpose they need it for. So it's cheaper for them to use, it has less transaction costs, of course, nobody has to worry about paying and billing and all kinds of administration that's left out. And you also have businesses develop services on open data, and that generates taxes, of course. They have income, value added tax and so on so that.

And the broader it is used, the more feedback you get on the quality of the data so that's also helpful. And we've got a feedback system where people can report any errors in the maps or in the information, which is also open to everybody. So that's all advantages.

And there are also disadvantages, of course. I don't know if you want to know them too.

Interviewer
Yes, yes. If you want to, yeah.

Interviewee
First of all, of course, there are costs involved in open data. Somebody has to pay for them. At the moment we get our budget for this kind of open data information from the Ministry of <redacted>. So they provide the budget. But society, and the Ministry and <inaudible>, they always want more. But the budget is usually don't grow accordingly. Sometimes, there is budget for development as well, but most of the times, that's limited. So, that hinders you in the development sometimes. If you have for instance paid products, then you can talk to the people who want the development and they can start paying for it. In this case, with open data, it's not possible.

Interviewer
So does it mean that every year then you have to request for this budget? Or do you get a fixed amount?

Interviewee
No, it's a long term agreement between <redacted> and the Ministry of <redacted>. But every <redacted> years that's renegotiated.

Interviewer
And for every renegotiation, meaning that you have to show the value of open data?

Interviewee
Not specifically the value because they are also aware of the value and they are fully supportive on open data. I mean they make new laws, like the law on large scale topography, and they specifically write down this has to be open data, so they are in favor of open data. And so we don't have to show the value of the open data. But they have limited budget and then, yeah, it's a struggle both

for them and for us. They will have to apply for the budget at the Ministry of Finance, so to say. They want to grow but they not always get the possibilities and if they don't get the possibilities, we can't get the money.

Interviewer
Yeah, yeah, I understood. I wanna get back to what you pointed out as the feedback loop, meaning that people can get back to you and for example, they can tell you that there are some mistakes in the map. So far do you get a lot of feedback?

Interviewee
Yes, yes.

Interviewer
And are this feedback, mostly from companies, from big companies, or they are also from individuals researchers?

Interviewee
They are mostly from professional users, so to say so, rarely from citizens, but that can be really small companies like independent -- the people who are a business owner so to say, one man business. But also large companies and also all kinds of government users because the government users, they are obliged to report back if they encounter a failure. There are lots of lots of reports come from the professional users within the government.

Interviewer
OK. And this feedback avenue is in the <redacted> platform? Or do they reach out to you by e-mail?

Interviewee
No, no, no. We've got a website for that. And it's called <redacted>. I will put it in the chat.

Interviewer
Thank you.

Interviewee
I'll put the link in there then you can directly go to it. That's easier.

Interviewer
All right, my next question, apart from the…

Interviewee
Before I forget that there's also some disadvantage about open data. In terms of, for instance, our aerial image is open data, and there are companies who are providing services with that open data. We now encounter the situation that we want to do similar services for the whole country and we are not allowed to because we've got a law in Europe which says there has to be fair play between governments and companies. They make the products and services, they earn money with it, the government is not allowed to give it away for free. I don't know how, how to say it. And the translation is the law on market and government. Yeah, <redacted>, it's called. And because of that law, it's not allowed to provide certain open data products although we could and we want to. That's the disadvantage of about open data, because there are those companies that can get the aerial image, can do their job and earn money with it, which is perfectly fine, I'm not against it, but it limits us in our possibilities.

Interviewer

But do you think it's possible for the <redacted> to also release this products and let whichever products are preferable to consumers, let them decide. Do you think that's a possibility?

Interviewee

No, no, no, no, no. The only way for us to provide that kind of products is when there is a legal ground to provide those products so that we can say it's not based on this law anymore, it's our task as a government to provide this kind of product. And so far, this list of products which is legally allowed is very limited. And together with <redacted>, we are looking at how can we broaden this open data family, so to say, but it has to have a legal ground.

Interviewer

Very interesting. It means that it's sort of like limits public organizations from being open data intermediaries?

Interviewee

Yeah, yeah, yeah. Which is not what we want. We want to be open with open data. So yes.

Interviewer

OK. Let me move to the next question. What is your perception of the health or sustainability of the current open data ecosystem?

Interviewee

Well, it's very profitable for the whole country. I'm very sure that we generate value for the country by providing open data information. But it does cost something and we have to get the information and we have to make products and we have to service it and the platform like <redacted> costs quite a lot of money too. So as long as there's enough budget to keep that running, then it's very sustainable. I mean, but yeah, it depends on the budget.

Interviewer

So you would say budget is one of the main concerns?

Interviewee

Yes, yes. I mean there's no argument against open data. There's no argument against the <redacted> platform. It's fully accepted in the [country C]. But to keep it running, we have to do something.

Interviewer

Do you have any idea of apart from budget, what are other actors can do within the ecosystem to improve the ecosystem?

Interviewee

Well on the terms of <redacted>, there are quite a lot of governments and other actors who are providing their open data, so that that helps. Of course, the more open data is available through very well known and very well used portals that's good -- we've got a concentration of all the open data through one portal, which is always better than 20 or 30 or 40 different portals, because then everybody gets lost, of course. So that's what helps that all actors provide their information through one portal.

But the only limit for <redacted> is that it's a geoportal, it's all about geo information. And of course there's a lot of other types of information as well and <redacted> doesn't provide it. So there, you have to make a connection for people who want combinations of geoinformation and administrative information or all kinds of other useful information they need. And the Ministry of <redacted>, of

course, has to provide the legal regulations for combination of that kind of information together because now there's quite a lot of information available and people start combining this information and through combining you can draw more specific conclusions, you get more specific results. And which also enter into the privacy of people. And we've got maps and there's data set or open data of buildings and addresses and combining buildings and addresses and maps and aerial images and whatever you can easily get to where people live and how the environment is and whatever is possible. And that has to be regulated, of course.

Interviewer

But do you think, like other actors are contributing enough data, apart from public organizations in the <redacted>.

Interviewee

I don't know. It can always be better, of course, but it's quite a lot already, but I'm not really on the <redacted> side. So I don't know if there's a big demand on specific data which are not available yet. At least all the key registers at the geo side come through <redacted>, so that's arranged. But also all kinds of other organizations like the <redacted>, they provide all their information, which is open -- there's also limited information, but all their open data goes through <redacted>, so I think it's pretty much quite a lot.

Interviewer

OK, alright. Let's move to the next question, regarding open data intermediaries now. Do you think that open data intermediaries are playing an important and positive role in an open data ecosystem right now?

Interviewee

Yes and no. No, not because they don't do it, but it can always be better, let's put it that way. They play a role and it's an important role because in terms of, as an example Esri, they provide to all their customers -- they get all the open data and they provide them in a format which is for their users and their software users. It's easier for Esri clients to use the information from Esri and to download it themselves or have the web services themselves and so on. So they make it easier for their clients to use open data, which is what we want. And we want any market party and it can be an intermediary or any other party to develop services with open data. That's what it's meant to be. So it's positive and there are more doing that kind of things.

Interviewer

When you say that they can do better, is there any specific things that you think they should do better?

Interviewee

Well, one of the things users of our open data information always ask is to give it in different formats. And we provide information in internationally recognized standard formats so that it's open to everybody. We don't do any industry specific formats or company specific formats. We just don't do it. It's not that we are not allowed to, but if we do one, we have to do them all and it gets messy and troublesome and so on. So what we want is we provide it in an internationally recognized standards and we want the companies, the markets, to provide it in all the industry standards because we also recognize that our format is not always the most useful for all kinds of users, architects and building companies and whatever they want it in DXF and anything. Now we've got 3D and they want it in BIM IFC and whatever, that's fine with us, but we we're not going to do it. And there, in general, the industry and the market can do better.

And Esri, to be honest, is the good example. For their clients, they provide a lot of information and their industry specific standards. But all the other software companies don't do that -- at least less, let me put it that way. And then architects and building companies start asking us why don't you provide it in DXF 11 and 12 and 13 and 15 and whatever. And then we say, well, we don't get the budget for that. It's not our task to do that. That's for the market.

And there, you can't force any of those companies to do it, because of course they have to find a way to earn money with that as well so that customers have to pay. And of course there they're happy that they get the information for free, but they are not happy that they have to pay them for the translation in their preferred format. There's always the discussion.

Interviewer
Apart from the format, do you think they can do better in other regards?

Interviewee
Of course there are wishes from users to do better together, right? At the moment, the developments in the 3D side on digital twins and so the developments are really starting to catch up, so to say. So there, has to be done a lot on our side for the data and on their side, with software and the translations and whatever. So it can always be better, but I can't mentioned specific things, let's say.

Interviewee
Do you also interview users?

Interviewer
Yes, I will.

Interviewee
Ok, ask them what we can do better together.

Interviewer
Do you think that in terms of providing feedback, do you think that open data intermediaries can do better in providing feedback back to you as a data provider?

Interviewee
We can always be better in touch with each other. And we are open to it, but also to a certain limit. We can't talk every week to every software provider or intermediary or whatever. So we organize our user community a little bit on regular meetings and there they are welcome and then they can give their feedback. And lots of those feedback is very welcome because then we can improve our products and our services. And sometimes, when they keep asking, do me this format or give me that part of the information ,which we don't provide as we we're also limited by law to what we provide, we don't provide every everything. But to the extent what we allowed to then we try to fulfil the wishes, within the limitations of possibilities and budgets, of course.

Interviewer
OK. So now I'm going to move -- I'm going to zoom into [Esri distributor in country C] as an open data intermediary. My first question is, how do you think Esri playing the role of enhancing access supply of flow of open data?

Interviewee
Yeah. I really think they enhance, for their customers and their clients, they enhance the possibilities of flowing of open data for sure. Yes, quite a lot. And we also recognize that. And if needed, we are

in good contact to be supportive. If we can help in a way that for them it makes it easier, then we try to. But not specifically for them but in the broader field, if we can make it easier for anybody to do then we try. And we value their inputs.

Interviewer

And do you think Esri plays a role in connecting other actors in the ecosystem?

Interviewee

On the user side, certainly yes. And they do that in many ways, but also in the way they organize congresses and meetings and that kind of things that helps people. Me as well, I prefer to go to their meetings to hear what their customers, what kind of information they use, what they use it for, do they use my specific products and services and in what way and to get in touch with them, what their needs are.

Interviewer

Yeah. So mostly through conferences and events?

Interviewee

For me, yes. But other colleagues of mine, they go to more tech like events and they have direct contact with the software developers and so on. So yeah, it's wide.

Interviewer

I think you've answered this, but I just wanna ask it again. Do you think Esri in any way helps or supports <redacted> in the implementation of open data?

Interviewee

They truly help us in in our doing our work where we are a huge Esri software user. And of course this software also helps us in making it open data. It's not very specific in terms of open data. There's one example where Esri helps us a lot and it's on the small scale topography, we've got a website which is called <redacted>. I'll put that in the chat tool. That's about <redacted>. And that's a website which is hosted by Esri. We've got a contract there with them. It's a big service, of course, we have for them. But it's very helpful for us because, but when they did, at the time it started, which is <redacted> was impossible for us to achieve and they helped us a lot with it and since then, we've got a very good cooperation on this, to improve it and it performs very good. And it has really a lot of very enthusiastic users and this is all open data as well. So in this in that sense, they helped us a lot.

Interviewer

OK. Does <redacted> ever need to pay to obtain data or open data services from Esri that are developed based on <redacted>'s open data?

Interviewee

Sorry, this I have to have a look in the question because I didn't really understand it.

Interviewer

Meaning that is there any instances that if you want to get data from Esri that is developed based on <redacted>'s open data, you have to pay for it?

Interviewee

I don't have to pay for any data to Esri and Esri doesn't have to pay to any data of my products at least. But what we pay for Esri is for the software and for the services they provide like this <redacted>, they host the service, we pay for the hosting, but not for the data.

Interviewer

OK.

Interviewee

We provide the data themselves ourselves and they use it also in their as Esri environment.

Interviewer

Because I heard different stories sometimes. Yeah, maybe in different countries, I guess.

Interviewee

That's possible of course. I'm not sure if there are people paying for data they provide but not <redacted>.

Interviewer

OK. In your opinion, do you see any negative or less than ideal impacts of Esri on other actors in the open data ecosystem, whether it's <redacted> as a provider, or to users?

Interviewee

No, not that I can think of.

Interviewer

OK.

Interviewer

Do you have any suggestions or wishes of how Esri's business model or way of doing things could or should be? Is there anything that should be changed?

Interviewee

Well, of course it's not up to me to discuss Esri's business model, but actually I wish that more companies would do it like Esri. It might not always be easy for them, but it helps us a lot that Esri provides a lot of data to their customers in easy data formats and easy accessible. The only thing you can think of is where they provide data that also for them has caused costs are incorporated in the cost of the software. Software users pay for the data part as well. If you don't use the data part, then you pay part partly for nothing. But on the other hand, that's every business model and they help a lot for those people. So we for instance, very rarely used the data from Esri ourselves because it's our own data, of course, and we pay for the software. So in that sense. But I don't see that as a problem because we are happy the way Esri plays its role as data intermediary. So that part is covered well.

Interviewer

OK, I want to follow up on that. What do you think about open source software, for example QGIS and also like open database like OpenStreetMap, do you think that they are better model compared to Esri that you have to pay for the software or do you think they complement each other?

Interviewee

Well, it at least it's a good model open source software and Open… What was the other thing you mentioned?

Interviewer

OpenStreetMap.

Interviewee

OpenStreetMap. Yes. It's a good model to use but it doesn't mean that it's always the ideal solution.

For instance, <redacted> we use QGIS as well for all kinds of applications, but we don't rely on QGIS with our primary production systems, so to say, and for that we consider it too risky. With Esri, we can make an agreement, we want to use your software for our jobs and we want proper support if needed. That, of course, with QGIS is not possible or you have to pay certain companies who are specialize in [open source], then you pay anyway. So, there's nothing wrong with open source software and open data like OpenStreetMap. OpenStreetMap is very valuable. It also helps us in rethinking how our data should be because lots of their data is very good quality, at least in [country C]. But they also use our data to improve their data and enhance it with their own information. So it works both ways.

Interviewer
Is there any particular instances where perhaps <redacted> look at OpenStreetMap and see if there are things that can be corrected?

Interviewee
No, we don't look at OpenStreetMap in the way that we could help them correct things. We don't check OpenStreetMap.

Interviewer
Yeah. No, I mean like, for example, if there are input on OpenStreetMap that can be used by <redacted> to improve the map of <redacted>.

Interviewee
We've considered that, but there's always the issue if it's correct and actual or not. We know the examples where one person puts new data in OpenStreetMap and another person corrects it or delete it or whatever. That's the difficulty with OpenStreetMap of course. In general 95-99% of the data is perfectly correct, but you don't know which is that. Our data is not better but at least we can guarantee its authoritative, we know that, we assure of it. Our customers like the Ministry of Defence, police, and all kinds of public services want to rely on our data and they can't rely on OpenStreetMap. And if it's not correct, they can't blame anybody at OpenStreetMap. And if our data are not correct, they can come to us and say, hey, you have to do better. That's what they like.

Interviewer
OK. Thank you. I think that those are the questions that I wanted to ask. Do you have anything that you want to tell me or you want to share?

Interviewee
No, I think I've read through your questions. I probably have told all the important things on open data.