

The Impact of Access Policies on the Development of Local SDIs: The Special Role of Utilities

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SUMMARY

Within the context of Spatial data infrastructures (SDI) access-to-government-data policies are important for the existence and successful use of the data, and the success of the SDI itself. Many researches have attempted to assess the success of access policies for public sector (geographic) information. Most compare the open access approach of the United States federal government with the cost recovery models in other countries, and conclude that the open access policy is more successful. Consistently, most research recommend nations to convert cost recovery policies into open access policies. The SDI hierarchy of global, regional, national, state, local and corporate SDIs, however, suggests that success of a specific policy option at one SDI level does not necessarily apply to other levels of SDIs. Therefore, although at first sight the accomplished researches provide convincing evidence for the success of the open access model at the national (or regional) level, they appear to have some deficiencies for application to the local levels of SDIs. The frequently cited researches underestimate the role cost recovery policies may have in the availability of spatial framework data at the local levels of SDI. Through an analysis of the large-scale topographic datasets in three jurisdictions in Europe and two states in the United States, this paper provides insights in the technical and non-technical characteristics of these data, and in the role private or semi-public utilities may play at the local SDI levels. The paper will show that cost recovery policies may be more beneficial for SDI development at the local levels than current research has suggested.