

# Open Data As Policy Instrument For 10 Local Governments

Submitted on 09 Mar 2014 by Ton Zijlstra

On March 6 ten local governments have signed on to the program "North-Holland Smarter 2014: a path to open data". In the presence of 60 representatives of various local governments in North-Holland the program was formally launched.

The program starts from the notion that the economic potential and transparency potential of open data may not be enough motivation for local governments to pro-actively publish open data, as the benefits usually accrue elsewhere. However, if open data is seen as a policy intervention in itself, than this can be a source of intrinsic motivation. Opening up data connected to relevant policy themes allows external stakeholders new courses of action. Those actions in return impact the policy areas, and thus create an effect for the local government.

The Province of North-Holland, the initiator of the program, earlier organized events such as the [Apps for North-Holland competition in 2011](#), and realized that while that raises awareness for open data potential and useful prototypes, it can't create lasting impact. For that publishing open data needs to become a routine part of information processes inside local governments. Positioning open data as a policy intervention is the incentive to create those routine information processes.

The ten participating local governments, over the course of 8 to 9 months will take three steps:

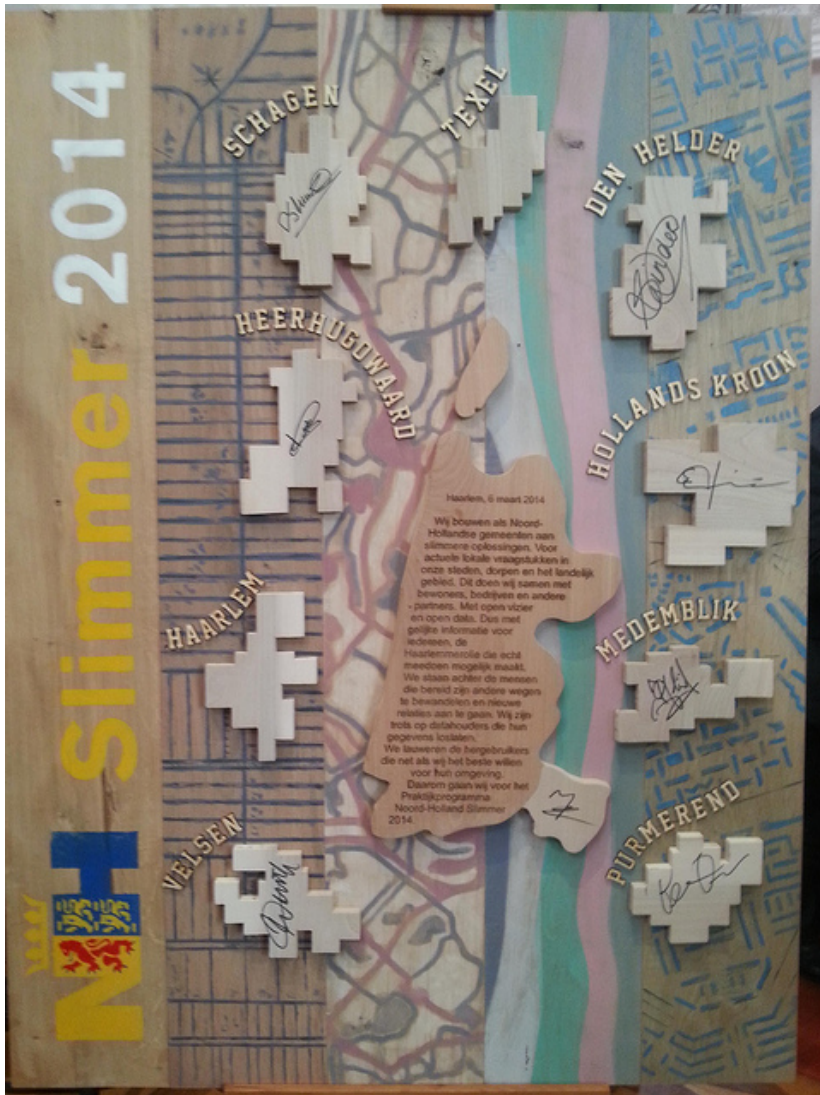
Identifying local relevant policy themes and the data sets connected to those themes

Establish a routine to publish those connected data sets as open data and to keep doing so

Finding and mobilizing local and national stakeholders to use the open data

The data being used is defined as the desired result, and merely publishing open data is not enough. I and my colleagues will be working with the local governments to take the steps outlined. Not just by providing ideas and knowledge, but also through hands-on support and work 'on the ground'. Every participating local government has freed up time for both the involved policy officers and the information management department to make this happen.

Progress of the program will be documented on the [Province's open data website](#).



*The image shows the 'Open Data Manifesto' that the participating local governments signed. It is a board with hand painted local data visualizations, the shape of the province with the text of the manifesto, and the signatures of local governments on the geographic shapes of their municipalities.*